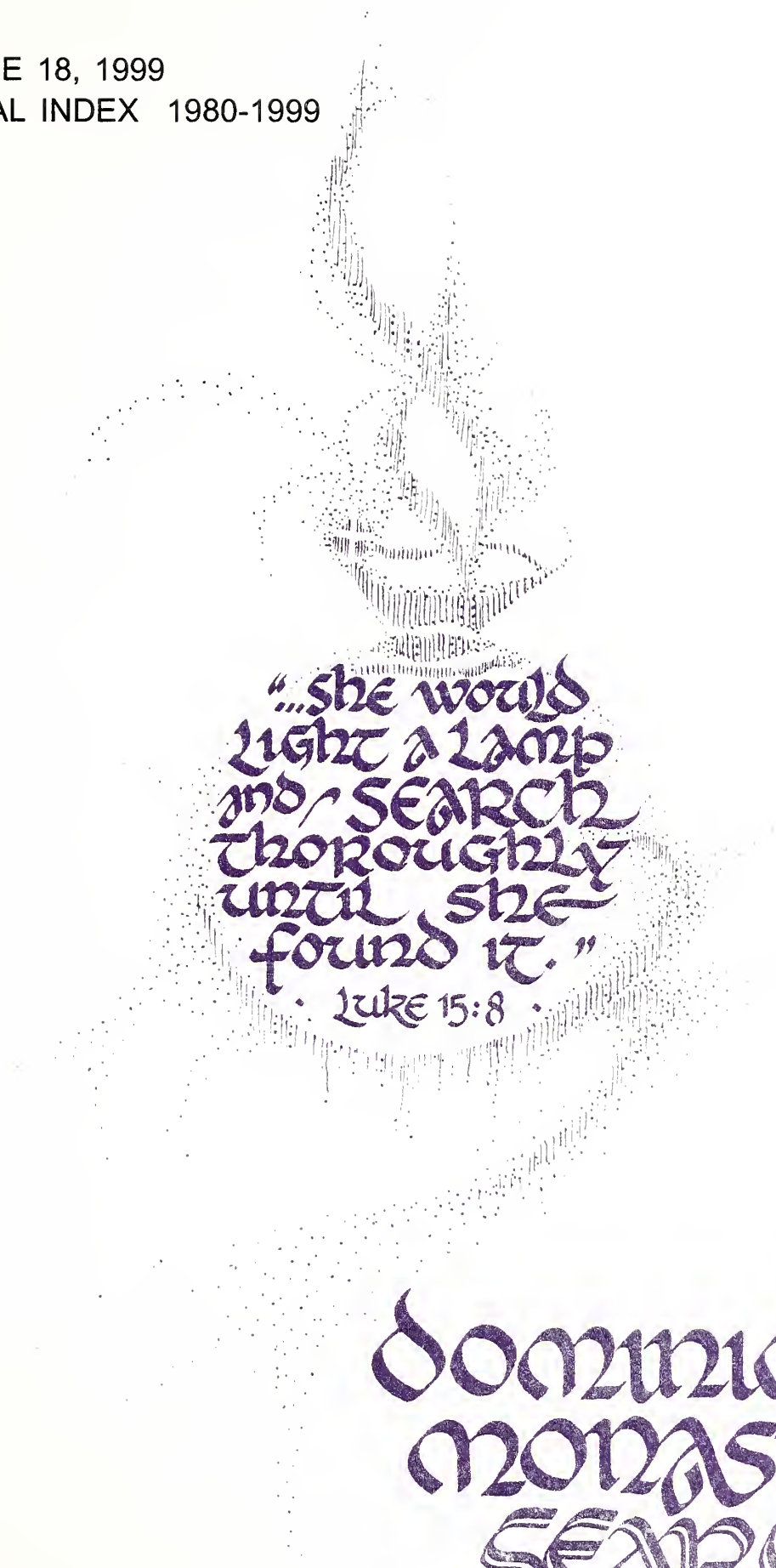



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"...she would
light a lamp
and SEARCH
thoroughly
until she
found it."
• Luke 15:8 •

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VOLUME 18

1999

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH

Volume 18
1999

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is published by the Conference of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers of the United States of America. The Conference is an organization of independent monasteries whose purpose is to foster the monastic contemplative life of the nuns in the spirit of Saint Dominic.

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DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is a spiritual and theological review written by the nuns. Its purpose is to foster the Dominican monastic contemplative life by the sharing of insights gained from study and prayer. It is published once a year as a service to the nuns. It is also available to the wider Dominican Family and others upon request. A donation of \$8.00 to aid in the cost of printing would be appreciated, when possible.

Dominican Monastic Search welcomes all its readers to contribute articles for publication. We ask that manuscripts be prepared with concern for literary and intellectual quality. Appropriate subjects for DMS include scripture, theology, philosophy, spirituality, Dominican life, and the liberal arts insofar as they contribute to our Dominican vocation. Serious poetry reflective of these categories may also be submitted, though only a small amount can be used. A theme for each issue of DMS is usually announced in advance, but is not intended to limit the scope of articles. Before submitting a manuscript, please refer to the page of guidelines at the end of the most recent issue of Dominican Monastic Search.

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This is
ETERNAL
LIFE,

that they
know you the only
TRUE

GOO, and

JESUS

CHRIST

whom you have sent.

JN. 17:3

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EDITORIAL

Each year as I send out the January letter in preparation for the year's *Dominican Monastic Search*, I always do so wondering what the Holy Spirit will accomplish with the few seeds the letter sows. This year the harvest has been a hundredfold.

Appropriately for this last edition of the waning millennium, there are reflections on the year's theme of God the Father, on the essence of time, on what it means to look back and to look forward, on God himself in his serene unity and glory.

As we pray again before a special picture, Fra Angelico's fresco depicting Jesus' revelation of himself to Mary Magdalen on Easter morning, can we not see it as an image of our hopes that all of humankind will meet the Risen Christ, so that his creation will flourish with a new vigor of holiness? This can come to pass if all Christians will "keep salt in their hearts" through holy discretion, as St. Catherine would have us do. And our poet phrases it in more haunting words: *Whom do you anoint?*

Part Two of the Commentary on the Nun's Constitutions, treating of common Life, the vows and regular observance, gives us thought as we prepare for the Conference's General Assembly 2000 theme of "Dwelling in the inmost life of God," which will explore the theological foundation of our life of regular observance.

Sr Susan Early, O.P. has kept her promise to provide a Topic Index, complementing the Author Index which appeared in 1998. She says there is the possibility that a Poetry Index may follow.

This may be the current Editorial Staff's final issue of their tenure. I am sure that I can speak for all of us in expressing gratitude to each of you who has given of her talents in writing articles, or who has taken the time to read and reflect on them. For me the experience of working with my three generous colleagues has been superlatively enriching, a sharing of gifts and of friendship, of common life across the boundaries of our individual communities. May *Dominican Monastic Search* continue to mediate a like experience to all of our readers.

Sr. Mary Dominic, O.P.
Elmira, NY
Editor

COME TO THE FATHER: A Kaleidoscope-View of the Father in the New Testament

Sr. Mary of the Sacred Heart, O.P.
West Springfield, MA

This article will offer a kind of kaleidoscope-view of the Father as glimpsed in the New Testament. The view is ever beautiful, ever moving, showing different aspects of the same subject. Each of the evangelists portrays the Father from a certain viewpoint. Each has something special to convey about the Father.

In an endeavor to capture what each evangelist had to say in regard to God the Father, I went to Strong's Concordance and jotted down all the passages in the New Testament referring to God the Father. Next I typed out all those passages using the Jerusalem bible translation. Then I used highlighters to indicate the various pronouns, articles or phrases connected with the word Father. All this resulted in quite a kaleidoscope of color. It was quite fascinating to see the different colors for each evangelist.

I used blue for "**the Father**." It is the mysterious color. Pink was used for "**my Father**." It conveys a blood relationship, and Jesus is the true and only-begotten Son of the Father. Green was used for "**your Father**." Being children of God is the hope to which we are called. Yellow was used for "**heavenly Father**" or "**Father in heaven**." See that sunshine up in the heavens! And finally purple was used for "**our Father**." No special significance for that color; it just happened to be about the only option I had left. To indicate direct address (i.e., "**Father**") I drew a box around the word or combination of words in the appropriate color.

As far as the quantity of times that the word "Father" was used in reference to God the Father, St. John the evangelist won the prize. He had the term "Father" one hundred and twenty nine times, more than all the other evangelists put together. St. Mark used it only four times. St. Matthew and St. Paul each used the word "Father" more than forty times. St. Luke speaks of the Father fourteen times and that number does not include any mention of father in the parable of the prodigal son. St. James and St. Peter used "Father" three times and St. Jude once. The author of the letter to the Hebrews used the term once, although he quotes two Old Testament passages, which contain the word. However, in those instances the word was used in reference to God not speaking thus to angels.

Now that you have the colors and pieces of our kaleidoscope-study of the "Father," we will begin to take a glimpse at some of them.

St. Mark and the Father

St. Mark uses the word "Father" very conservatively in his gospel. However, he is the only evangelist who tells us that Jesus prayed to the Father saying: "**Abba, (Father)!**" (Mk. 14:36).¹ We know that the term "Abba" is one of endearment such as a child might say: "Daddy." Jesus calls upon his "Abba" in Gethsemane, asking him to remove the cup. But

Jesus concludes his prayer saying: "But let it be as you, not I, would have it" (Mk. 14:36). The theme which St. Mark emphasizes in his gospel is the journey up to Jerusalem, where Jesus will suffer and die. It is the place where our redemption will be effected. Death is not the end of the journey but leads to resurrection.

St. Mark first makes mention of the Father halfway through his gospel in chapter eight. "For if anyone in this adulterous and sinful generation is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mk. 8:38).² In this verse Jesus, the Son of Man, is also the Son of the Father. Jesus is well aware of who his Father is. He knows that he is the Son of the Father and what he is about. He has a mission culminating in Jerusalem but he will come again in glory.

St. Mark's third mention of the Father touches on the Father's omniscience. "But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but **the Father**" (Mk. 13:32).³

The other time St. Mark uses "Father" is in reference to us. "And when you stand in prayer, forgive whatever you have against anybody, so that your Father in heaven⁴ may forgive your failings too" (Mk. 11:25-26). This verse follows an instruction on prayer regarding asking and believing that you have received what was asked for. St. Mark does not give us the Lord's Prayer as do Matthew and Luke. What is striking is the instruction to forgive. The "your" is plural and "standing" is the posture taken when the Our Father is prayed at Mass. So if the Lord's injunction is carried out in prayer, we and the disciples would pray: "Our Father in heaven,... forgive us... as we forgive."

If we look closely at the other passages quoted above and their context, we can see other elements of the Our Father. For example, the passage about the Son of Man coming in the glory of his Father is preceded by the passage: "whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mk. 8:35).⁵ It is likewise followed by: "There are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power" (Mk. 9:1).⁶ Again we see the posture of prayer, which is used for the Our Father, i.e., standing. In this kaleidoscopic view we can also glimpse a prayer that the kingdom come.

As for the Father's will being done, Jesus is our model and shows us how to make that prayer. Calling upon "Abba" he prays: "not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mk. 14:36).⁷ In verse 38 Jesus instructs the disciples to "pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Mk. 14:38).⁸

So if we were to compile the Lord's prayer as suggested by St. Mark, putting together these various kaleidoscopic views, it might read thus: "Abba," Our Father in heaven, your kingdom come, your will be done, give us what we ask you for, forgive us as we forgive and let us not enter into temptation.

St. Matthew and the Father

St. Matthew's gospel (the one carried by St. Dominic) was quite fascinating when it was color coded. It seemed to come in three sections. The Father was first mentioned in chapter five. The section from chapter five to chapter 10:29 was all yellow and green with only one pink. In other words it made mention primarily of "your Father in heaven" and "your heavenly Father" with the one exception of "my Father⁹ in heaven." The second section was primarily in pink and

yellow with two blues in the same verse and one green. In other words the emphasis was on **“my Father”** and **“my Father in heaven.”** **“Your Father in heaven”** was only mentioned once in this section. It was like flipping the coin over. **“The Father”** appeared twice only and for the first time in St. Matthew’s gospel. The third and final section was in pink and blue with a single touch of yellow and that verse linked the second and third sections together. “You have only **ONE FATHER**,¹⁰ and he is in heaven” (Mt. 23:9). A kaleidoscopic sandwich follows with **“the Father”** beginning and ending the section. In between we have **“my Father”** and two of those are direct-address, **“my Father.”**

Some scholars hold that St. Matthew wrote his gospel after St. Mark wrote his. Whereas St. Mark mentioned **your Father in heaven** only once, St. Matthew can’t say it enough. Interestingly enough the first verse in which he speaks of the Father reads thus: “...your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to **your Father in heaven**” (Mt. 5:15). I can’t help but think of St. Dominic, who is called “Light of the Church.” He certainly let his light shine for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Another interesting coincidence is the fact of a star being associated with St. Dominic and stars are in the heavens. St. Paul writes to the Philippians: “You will shine in the world like bright stars because you are offering it the word of life” (Phil. 2:15-16).

Getting back to the main topic of the Father in St. Matthew, as we look at verse 5:16, where St. Matthew first makes mention of the Father it seems that his readers or listeners already know that God is their Father in heaven. And in his next mention of Father he explains how “you will be sons of **your Father in heaven**” (Mt. 5:45). “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Mt. 5:44). And a few verses later he says: “You must therefore be perfect just as **your heavenly Father** is perfect” (Mt. 5:48). We might get an insight into what St. Matthew means by saying to be perfect or complete as the Father is perfect by looking at the context and glancing back a bit. Speaking of the Father, he says: “For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mt. 5:45). In other words you must love everyone. Your love must go out to good and evil, just and unjust. “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?” (Mt. 5:46).¹¹ The verb for “love” is the agape love. The verb *agapao* can mean “to love, value, esteem, feel or manifest generous concern for, be faithful towards; to delight in; to set store upon.”¹² “If we love a person deeply and passionately, humbly and selflessly, we will be quite sure that if we give that person all we have to give, we will still be in default, that if we give that person the sun, the moon and the stars, we will still be in debt. He who is in love is always in debt; the last thing that enters his mind is that he has earned a reward.”¹³

For Matthew the Father is one who rewards. Although he says that your light must shine he also cautions one to keep one’s motive pure. Jesus says: “Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from **your Father in heaven**” (Mt. 6:1). Commenting on this passage William Barclay describes the Christian reward as threefold.

The first of the Christian rewards is *satisfaction*. The doing of the right thing, obedience to Jesus Christ, the taking of his way, whatever else it may or may not bring, always brings satisfaction.... The second reward of the Christian life is *still more work to do*. It is the paradox of the Christian idea of reward that a task well done does not bring rest and comfort and ease; it brings still greater demands and still more strenuous endeavours.... The third, and the final, Christian reward is what men all through the ages have called *the vision of God*.... If a man all his life has sought to walk with God,

if he has sought to obey his Lord, if goodness has been his quest through all his days, then all his life he has been growing closer and closer to God, until in the end he passes into God's nearer presence, without fear and with radiant joy - and that is the greatest reward of all."¹⁴

In the threefold expression of piety (i.e., almsgiving, prayer and fasting) St. Matthew changes from the second person plural ("y'all", as the Texans would say) to the second person **singular** pronoun (*sou* in the Greek text). Two other aspects feature here: namely, that these works be done "in secret" and the omission of the modifier **heavenly**. When it is a matter of others giving praise to "your Father in heaven" he says "your light must shine" (Mt. 5:16). But if it is a matter of being noticed, the recommendation is that one not be seen by men but that one be seen by your Father. And for this purpose do it in secret "and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you" (Mt. 6:4,6,18).

The "Our Father" is in the midst of the above threefold presentation and uses possessive plural pronouns. It is a liturgical prayer and we say it three times daily. We are all God's children and as such we pray "Our Father in heaven" (Mt. 6:9).¹⁵

At the end of the "Our Father" the first element that is commented upon is forgiveness. "Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either." (Mt. 6:14). God the Father is a forgiving Father and we must forgive just as he does because we are his children. At first sight this seems to be the only element that is commented upon at the end of the prayer. But if we skip past the "fasting" section, which uses the singular pronoun, the commentary seems to continue in a chiasmic form (a-b-c-c-b-a). Jesus tells us that your heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air and "are you not worth much more than they are?" (Mt. 6:26). We can trust our Father to provide for our needs. He will not refuse our prayer for daily bread. He feeds us with the best of wheat and with the cup of his Son's blood, which is "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt. 26:28). The birds do not sow or reap but receive their food as pure gift. "Are you not worth much more than they are?" (Mt. 6:26). What a price the Son of God paid for our salvation and for the forgiveness of our sins! Jesus says: "Do not say, 'What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?' ...your heavenly Father knows you need them all" (Mt. 6:31-32). Our heavenly Father feeds us with the Body and Blood of his only Son. He sent his Son, who clothed himself in our humanity. And St. Paul urges us to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14).

Jesus tells us to "set your hearts on his (the Father's) kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well" (Mt. 6:33). Regarding prayer, Jesus urges the disciple to "ask,...search,...knock" (Mt. 7:7). He concludes: "If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Mt. 7:11). The Father seems to have as St. Catherine would say an "eager desire" to give to his children, but they must ask.

Jesus taught us to begin our prayer with "Our Father in heaven...your kingdom come, your will be done..." (Mt. 6:9). And ending our chiasm he warns that "It is not those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). This is St. Matthew's first use of my Father in heaven. All the preceding mention of the Father has been placed in the evangelical discourse taking place on the Mount of Beatitudes and Jesus has spoken of your Father in heaven.

The next mention of Father takes place within the apostolic discourse. Jesus tells them that they will be persecuted but not to worry. "What you are to say will be given to you when the time comes; because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you" (Mt. 10:20). Although he counsels the apostles not to fear those who can kill the body, Jesus does not say they will not die but that your Father knows and cares. "Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing... you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows" (Mt. 10:29, 31). Jesus continues: "So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of men, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. But the one who disowns me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven" (Mt. 10:31-33). This is serious business and not children's play.

In the section of his gospel which has the heading "The Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven" St. Matthew presents the Father as the one who reveals. The Father reveals because it pleases him to do so. "At that time Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, **Father**, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, **Father**, for that is what it pleased you to do'" (Mt. 11:25). A footnote in the Jerusalem bible points out that "these things" refer not to what precedes these verses but to the 'mysteries of the kingdom.' Jesus replied to the disciples: "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven..." (Mt. 13:11). In his revealing the Father does not do it directly but in and through his Son. "Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except **the Father**, just as no one knows **the Father** except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt. 11:26-27). The Greek word for "entrust" is *paredothe*, which can be translated *give over*, *hand over*, *deliver up*, *commit*, *intrust*, etc.¹⁶ In Greek the verbs are the root form of nouns, adjectives and adverbs. In this instance we can gain a little insight into this verb by taking a look at various uses or translations for the noun. It can be translated in the New Testament as *what is transmitted* in the way of teaching, *precept*, *doctrine*.¹⁷ One gets a sense of "handing over" as in a tradition, something that is entrusted from one to another. In the Old Testament the Word of God was "handed over" from one generation to another before it was ever written down. Notice too that the revelation is made to "mere children" or "babes" as the RSV translation has it. The *nepiois* is used here metaphorically as *a babe* in knowledge, *unlearned*, *simple*.¹⁸ The children come to know their Father through their elder brother. This section is Johannine in flavor and has the Johannine kaleidoscope colors of pink and blue in the words **the Father**, my Father and the direct address **Father**. Later in Matthew's gospel Peter professes that Jesus is, yes, the Christ but also "the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16). And again it is the Father who reveals this. Jesus says to Peter: "Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven" (Mt. 16:17).

In St. Matthew's collection of parables the Father is mentioned once. It occurs in the parable of the dandelion being explained to the disciples. The dandelion, symbolizing those who have done evil, is gathered and burnt in the fire at the end of time. But the "virtuous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt. 13:43). Do you hear the echo ringing of Matthew's first mention of the Father? "Your light must shine ... so that ... they may give the praise to your Father in heaven" (Mt. 5:16).

The "Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven" section (Chapters 11 and 12) in St. Matthew's gospel ends with: "Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother" (Mt. 12:50). We might ask just what the Father's will is, since the one who

does his will enters the kingdom. Sometimes it is a help to say what something is **not** in order to come closer to understanding what it **is**. Jesus tells us that “it is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost (Mt. 18:14). Here Jesus is speaking of the one stray sheep. This text is in the section in St. Matthew’s gospel on the “Discourse of the Church”, i.e., Chapter 18. If it is **not** the Father’s will that one of these little ones be lost, could that be reworded in a positive statement to say that it **is** the Father’s will that all be saved? The next place we find the Father’s will mentioned is in Gethsemane. “**My Father**,... let it be as you, not I, would have it”(Mt. 26:39). And again: “**My Father**,... your will be done!” (Mt. 26:42).

Immediately preceding the lesson of the lost sheep is the warning about leading others astray. It ends “See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven” (Mt. 18:10). The Jerusalem bible has a footnote that some ancient manuscripts add verse 11, which reads: “For the Son of Man has come to save what was lost.” The Father’s love not only provides angels, who are continually in the Father’s presence and who intercede for their charges but sends his beloved Son to suffer and die that men and women might be saved.

In Chapter 23 of Matthew’s gospel Jesus says: “You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only ONE FATHER and he is in heaven” (Mt. 23:9). He alone is Father. Might not we hear this as an echo of Deuteronomy, substituting the New Testament revelation of God as Father? “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!” (Dt. 6:4). Hear, you little ones, the Lord is our Father, the Lord alone!

The Father is omniscient; he is all-knowing. Only the Father knows the day and the hour of the end time. “But as for that day and hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, not the Son, no one but **the Father** only” (Mt. 24:36). He knows your needs. He knows every hair of your head. He knows your inmost thoughts. He knows what is in the heart of man.

The Father is the one who is all powerful. But he is also patient. He waits for his wayward children to come home; he sends his Son to search for the lost. His Son will lay down his life for the sheep. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus said to Peter: “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father who would promptly send more than twelve legions of angles to my defence?” (Mt. 26:53). Jesus waits for the Father with courage. He is stouthearted. He knows that the Father will come at the proper moment and his reward is with him.

The Father is one who rewards. No angels appeared in Matthew’s Gethsemane to comfort the Son or when the Son laid down his life. But the Son will have the reward of inaugurating the kingdom of the Father at the Last Judgment.¹⁹ “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour” (Mt. 16:27).

The seats at Jesus’ right and left in the kingdom are allotted by the Father. “They belong to those to whom they have been allotted by my Father” (Mt. 20:23). Those who enter the kingdom are recognized by their rootedness in the family of God, i.e., they are sons and daughters (Mt. 5:44). The God of the Old Testament “brought a vine out of Egypt” and planted it (Ps. 80). Jesus tells his disciples that “any plant my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots...” (Mt. 15:13). It is important to remain rooted in the family of the Father and not become an outcast like the unforgiving debtor. And Jesus makes that quite clear. “And

that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (Mt. 18:35).

We belong to God's royal family. St. Matthew gives us the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David..., the Lord's chosen King (Mt. 1:1). The kingdom theme is throughout his gospel. At the judgment "Christ, the Messiah-King, ushers the elect from his own kingdom to that of his Father."²⁰ "Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25:34). The children are the recipients of the inheritance; they are heirs and they are heirs because the Father has made them such. The firstborn son is the recipient of the father's blessing in the Jewish tradition. Isaac claimed Esau's blessing. But we, as the Father's children receive a blessing because we are one with Jesus, the true Son; we are his brothers and sisters.

St. Luke and the Father

Those elements or themes unique to St. Luke in regard to the Father touch on and include: compassion and the Holy Spirit. His parable on the prodigal son is revelatory of the Father's love for us. Those who influence us color our thinking and it is said that St. Luke received much of his material from Our Lady, the Daughter of God the Father, Spouse of the Holy Spirit and the Mother of Compassion. Perhaps that is one reason why St. Luke so often mentions women in his gospel. Being a Gentile, he would have been considered an outcast by the Jews and "outcasts" feature in his gospel too.

In St. Luke's first mention of the Father Jesus says: "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate" (Lk 6:36). Some translations have "merciful" and the Greek word *oiktirmon* can be translated either. However, the root verb, *oikteiro* is "to compassionate, have compassion on, exercise grace or favour towards". For the noun *oiktirmos* the lexicon gives *compassion; kindness*, in relieving sorrow and want; *favour, grace, mercy*. The Greek word for "mercy" is *eleos* and can mean a *benefit* which results from compassion. Luke was of pagan origin and if we look at the ancient Greek meanings, *oiktirmos* "is used for the emotion of sympathy itself. *Oiktirein* thus means 'to be sympathetic' in the sense of grief or sorrow, but also in that of the sympathy which is ready to help.... Mercy is invoked from the deity, or *oiktirein* is predicated of it."²¹

The exhortation to "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly..." (Lk 6:27) occurs in the preceding section of Luke's gospel. That section ends with "You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked" (Lk 6:35). Note that in Luke loving one's enemies and doing good thus makes one a son of God.

Jesus practices what he preaches. His first words from the cross are: "**Father**, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). The Greek word for (Jesus) "said" (*elegen*) is in the imperfect tense. In Greek that connotes a sense of repeated action and could be translated: "he kept saying." The "saying" might not necessarily be a verbal one but certainly one flowing from the heart! Forgiveness has been described as giving a free gift to someone who does not deserve it. It takes the divine power of love to bestow forgiveness.

Luke the physician certainly would be attuned to physical illness but perhaps he also had that perception of spiritual illness that causes men and women to act in less than godly ways. How does healing come to the wounded minds and hearts of God's sick children? Might it be through forgiveness?

Corrie ten Boom was in a German concentration camp with her sister. She had suffered at the hands of the Germans but later went about preaching forgiveness. Her mind and heart had good intentions but when she recognized a former S.S. man in the church in which she was speaking flashbacks raced through her mind.

He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. 'How grateful I am for your message, *Fraulein*,' he said. 'To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!'

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; and was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself.²²

The Holy Spirit holds special mention in Luke's gospel. Speaking of Jesus, St. Luke tells us: "filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, he said, I bless you, **Father**, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things...and revealing them to mere children. Yes, **Father** that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father..." (Lk 10:21-22). The Father entrusts all to the Son, including man's redemption.

God breathed the breath of life into Adam, placed him in the Garden of Eden and entrusted its care to him. (In Greek the word *pneuma* means both breath and spirit). Luke traces Jesus' ancestry back to "Adam, son of God" (Lk 3:38). Adam and Eve, the first woman, rupture their relationship with the Father and turn thief by taking what was not theirs to take, i.e., fruit from the tree of knowledge. The Son of the Father will reconcile humankind to the Father by permitting himself to be hanged on the tree of the cross between two criminals (might they be thieves?).

Jesus, the true Son of God, instructs his disciples that these words must be fulfilled in him: "He let himself be taken for a criminal" (Lk 22: 37). (A criminal is one who breaks the law). One chapter later Jesus is crucified between two criminals. One asks Jesus: "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42). Jesus promises him *paradeiso*. The word is translated *paradise* in the New Testament; but it can mean *a park, a forest, a garden of trees of various kinds, a pleasure-park*. In the Septuagint it stands for *the Garden of Eden*.²³

In chapter twelve Jesus tells his disciples not to worry about “your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it” (Lk 12: 22). “Your Father well knows you need” these things. “Set your hearts on his kingdom, and these other things will be given you as well” (Lk 12:30, 31). In the Garden of Eden God clothed the thieves, Adam and Eve. On Calvary one thief set his heart on the kingdom. If the father of the prodigal son called for a robe, sandals, a ring (signifying his sonship), will the Father not fittingly clothe the thief, who is with his Son in paradise. The thief no longer thief but now a brother of Jesus and son of the Father. The same words said to the disciples might well be applied to the Good Thief: “There is no need to be afraid ... it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom”! (Lk 12:32).

In Luke’s account of the Lord’s Supper immediately after the institution of the Eucharist, Jesus tells of his betrayal. The disciples question one another, which of them would do this but in the next breath they are disputing about which of them is the greatest. In effect Jesus tells them that the greatest is the one who serves and then adds: “You are the men who have stood by me faithfully in my trials; and now I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father conferred one on me: you will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom...” (Lk 22:28-29). The ironic thing is that Peter will yet deny and the others will not stand but flee. The Greek word *diatithemai*, here translated “confer,” can mean *to arrange according to one’s own mind; to make a disposition, to make a will; to settle the terms of a covenant, to ratify*.²⁴

Here one might recall St. Luke’s parable of the prodigal son. He is the only evangelist who gives it to us and Henri Nouwen wrote a whole book on the painting by Rembrandt depicting this parable.²⁵ In the parable the father represents God the Father. We might see a likeness in the lavishness of the father giving his undeserving younger son his share of his inheritance. Did not Adam and Eve squander their heritage? In his book Nouwen suggests that the prodigal son returning to his father might symbolize Jesus, who took upon himself our sinful humanity. The Father thus restores his alienated children to the heritage that was theirs as sons and daughters through his Son. All the outcasts, the tax collectors and sinners, the thief at his side are called to be sons of the kingdom.

God breathed into Adam the *pneuma* (breath/spirit) of God and he became a living being. On the cross Jesus’ last words in Luke’s gospel are: “**Father**, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Lk 23:46). And Luke, the physician, concludes this verse saying: “With these words he breathed his last.” Here we have Jesus breathing forth his spirit (*pneuma*) back to the Father, who is the source of life.

After his resurrection Jesus said to his disciples: “And now I am sending down to you what **the Father** has promised” (Lk 24:49). This is Luke’s last mention of the Father in his gospel but he continues the message in the Acts of the Apostles. “He told them ... to wait there for what **the Father** had promised” (Acts 1:4). Asking about when the kingdom would be restored, Jesus answered: “It is not for you to know times or dates that **the Father** has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses...” (Acts 1:7-8). Luke’s final mention of the Father is Trinitarian. “God raised this man Jesus to life, and all of us are witnesses to that. Now raised to the heights by God’s right hand, he has received from **the Father** the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit” (Acts 2:32-33).

Granting pardon brings a reward from our compassionate Father: “Grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down,

shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap..." (Lk 6:38). How much more will be the outpouring, the gushing forth of the Spirit.

St. John and the Father

St. John's kaleidoscope colors were almost entirely blue and pink. Throughout St. John's gospel Jesus spoke of **the Father**, my Father, or in direct address **Father**. Only once and at the very end of his gospel does he speak positively to the disciples about your Father. St. John is the mystic theologian; in his gospel he emphasizes Christ's oneness or union with the Father. In his first and second letter he mentions especially our relationship with **the Father**.

St. John is the beloved disciple, who "was lying close to the breast of Jesus" (Jn. 13:23)²⁶ at the last Supper. This is the disciple, who as it were, heard the heartbeat of the Lord Jesus. He tells us: "it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (Jn. 1:18). Might we not say that in a sense Jesus heard the heartbeat of the Father? The Phillips Modern English translation reads thus: "It is true that no one has ever seen God at any time. Yet the divine and only Son, who lives in the closest intimacy with the Father, has made him known."

The Greek word "*kolpos*" means "*the bosom*." The Jerusalem Bible and the New English Bible seem to convey the sense of the text in their translations. It seems to me that the New American Bible leaves much to be desired with its translation: "ever at the Father's side," more like sitting in two chairs than that symbolized by reclining on the bosom or close to the heart. The New Oxford Annotated Bible translates the verse: "The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. Have you ever heard someone say: 'I can't get inside him/her?'" What they are basically saying is that they do not understand how they think, what they feel, what makes them tick. Ronald Knox has this rendition of the aforementioned verse: "No man has ever seen God; but now his only-begotten Son, who abides in the bosom of the Father, has himself become our interpreter." I found "interpreter" an odd word at first but as I reflected on it, I realized that an interpreter takes the message and speaks it in another language so as to render it understandable - in so far as that is possible. It can be a challenge with idioms. But that is what God the Word, the Word made flesh, did. He tried to convey in human language a divine message of love and he did it because he was sent by the Father. The Father wanted us to get the message and who best could give it but the Son after his own heart.

This being "sent by the Father" appears in various forms in St. John's gospel over a dozen times. We see it again and again. The Father sent the Son because he was drawing us to himself. He sent the Son to teach us. Jesus says: "No one can come to me unless he is drawn by **the Father** who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: *They will all be taught by God*, and to hear the teaching of **the Father** and learn from it, is to come to me. Not that anybody has seen **the Father**, except the one who comes from God: he has seen **the Father**" (Jn. 6:44-46). Let us see some of the elements in this kaleidoscope-look at the Father as seen in St. John's gospel.

The Father is the source of life and he makes the Son source of life. "Whoever listens to my words, and believes in the one who sent me, has eternal life;... **the Father**, who is the source of life, has made the Son the source of life;..." (Jn. 5:24, 26). The Father raises the dead

and gives them life. "As **the Father** raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life..." (Jn. 5:21). The Son draws life from the Father. "I, who am sent by **the living Father**, myself draw life from **the Father**..." (Jn. 6:57).

The Father gives life-giving bread, bread from heaven. "It is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (Jn. 6:32). "Whoever eats me will draw life from me... anyone who eats this bread will live for ever" (Jn. 6:57,58).

Let us now look at what St. John, the mystic theologian tells us about the Father and the Son and their relationship. We will draw heavily from the Fathers of the Church for helping us to understand what St. John is teaching us in his gospel.

"I and **the Father** are one" (Jn. 10:30).²⁷ St. Augustine writes: "*We are one*. What He is, that am I, in respect of essence, not of relation."²⁸ St. Hilary writes: "They are one, not by any economy merely, but by the nativity of the Son's nature, since there is no falling off of the Father's divinity in begetting Him.... The Father and Son are one in respect of nature, honour, and virtue: and the same nature cannot will different things."²⁹

The Father and the Son are in one another by their equality. Jesus exhorts the unbelieving Jews to believe the works he did that they might know that: "...**the Father** is in me and I am in **the Father**" (Jn. 10:38). St. Augustine says: "The Only-begotten Son of God is in the Father, and the Father in Him, as an equal in an equal."³⁰

The Father and the Son are in one another by their essential nature but they are distinct Persons. At the Last Supper Philip wants to see the Father and Jesus responds: "To have seen me is to have seen **the Father**.... Do you not believe that I am in **the Father** and **the Father** is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself: it is **the Father**, living in me, who is doing this work. You must believe me when I say that I am in **the Father** and **the Father** is in me..." (Jn. 14:9, 10-11). St. Augustine writes: "When two persons are very like each, we say, If you have seen the one, you have seen the other. So here, *He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father*; not that He is both the Father, and the Son, but that the Son is an absolute likeness of the Father."³¹ And St. Hilary writes: "For what excuse was there for ignorance of the Father, or what necessity to shew Him, when the Father was seen in the Son by His essential nature, while by the identity of unity, the Begotten and the Begetter are one: *Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?*... But the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, not by a conjunction of two harmonizing essences, nor by a nature grafted into a more capacious substance as in material bodies, in which it is impossible that what is within can be made external to that which contains it; but by the birth of a nature which is life from life; forasmuch as from God nothing but God can be born. The unchangeable God follows, so to speak, His own nature, by begetting unchangeable God.... We understand then here the nature of God subsisting in Him, since God is in God, nor besides Him who is God, can any other be God."³²

We look to the letters of St. John to see what makes us to be begotten by God. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child whom he begets" (1 Jn. 5:1). The Phillips Modern English translation reads thus: "Everyone who really believes that Jesus is the Christ is himself one of God's family. The man who loves the Father cannot help loving the Father's sons."

How awesome to be children of God. St. John tells us to think about that and to think about the Father's love that brought it about. "Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are" (1Jn. 3:1). [I will bold-type certain words in this same verse using various texts to show how enriching it can be to read more than one translation to deepen our appreciation of a given verse.] Consider the **incredible love** that the Father has shown us in allowing us to be called "children of God" - and that is not just what we are called, but what we *are*.³³ "See what love the Father has **given** us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."³⁴ "See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children - think of it - and we **really are!**"³⁵

"**The Father** loves the Son..." (Jn. 3:35). The Father shows the Son everything he does himself (See Jn. 5:20). "**The Father** raises the dead and gives them life..." (Jn. 5:21). It was the will of the Father that his Only-begotten Son be sent on a mission of love. "I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of the one who sent me.... Yes, it is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and that I shall raise him up on the last day" (Jn. 6:37,39-40). Jesus states: "**The Father** loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father" (Jn. 10:17-18). Theophylact writes: "The Father does not bestow His love on the Son as a reward for the death He suffered in our behalf; but He loves Him, as beholding in the Begotten His own essence, whence proceeded such love for mankind."³⁶ And Chrysostom writes: "He says, in condescension to our weakness, Though there were nothing else which made Me love you, this would, that ye are so loved by My Father, that, by dying for you, I shall win His love. Not that He was not loved by the Father before, or that we are the cause of such love."³⁷

In John's gospel we see a movement from heaven to earth and back to heaven again. "I came from **the Father** and have come into the world and now I leave the world to go to **the Father** (Jn. 16:28). Jesus knew the "hour" when all would take place. "It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to **the Father**. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was.... Jesus knew that **the Father** had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God..." (Jn. 13:1, 3). At the Last Supper Jesus prayed: "**Father**, the hour has come.... I have glorified you on earth and finished the work that you gave me to do. Now, **Father**, it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world was. I have made your name known..." (Jn. 17:1,4-6).

His Name is "Father"; it is not just a title. In biblical thought the "name" is the person. The Phillips Modern English translation for the above verse reads: "I have shown your self to the men...." The Greek verb *phaneroo* can be translated in many ways, some of which include: *to bring to light, to set in a clear light; to manifest, display; to declare, make known; to disclose; to reveal; to present to view.*³⁸

Chapter 20 is the last chapter in St. John's gospel where he makes mention of the Father. It is here after the resurrection of Jesus and at the empty tomb that Jesus says to Mary Magdalene: "Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to **the Father**. But go and find the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (Jn. 20:17). Note that Jesus says to find the "brothers." **Now** all believers are

children of God. Now Jesus tells us he is your Father. Although he is speaking to Mary Magdalen, the “your” is plural.

In the final mention of “Father” in St. John’s gospel it is the same day, the first day of the week. This time he is in the upper room with his fearful disciples. He says to them: “As **the Father** sent me, so am I sending you.” As God’s children, believers are to carry on the mission and work of the Father. “ After saying this he breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit...’ (Jn. 20:21). Note the *pneuma* breath/spirit. At the Last Supper Jesus had said: “I shall ask **the Father**, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, that Spirit of truth...” (Jn. 14:15). And again: “When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from **the Father**, the Spirit of truth who issues from **the Father**, he will be my witness. And you too will be witnesses...” (Jn. 15:26-27).

As the Father sends the Son on a mission of love, so too the Son sends those who believe in him on a mission of love. St. John begins his first letter saying: “Something which has existed since the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word, who is life - this is our subject. That life was made visible: we saw it and we are giving our testimony, telling you of the eternal life which was with **the Father** and has been made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us, as we are in union with **the Father** and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1Jn. 1:1-3).

The Father is a life giver. The Son came that we might have life and have it to the full, abundantly and eternally. We are made children of God. We have been made members of the divine household. Jesus said: “There are many rooms in my Father’s house...” (Jn. 14:2). That Greek word, *oikos*, is so rich. It can mean a *house, dwelling; place of abode*; met. a *spiritual house or structure*; meton. a *household, family; a spiritual household; family, lineage*.³⁹ The Greek noun *mone* can mean a *stay in any place; an abode, dwelling, mansion*. One might wonder if this is the text which prompted St. Teresa to write about the interior castle with its seven mansions, where the soul dwells in God. The verb form and root word of *mone* is *meno*; some of its meanings include: *to dwell, lodge, sojourn, to remain, to abide, to be in close and settled union; to indwell*.⁴⁰

This union, this dwelling in God will be an eternal indwelling. So John writes: “Keep alive in yourselves what you were taught in the beginning: as long as what you were taught in the beginning is alive in you, you will live in the Son and in **the Father**; and what is promised to you by his own promise is eternal life” (1Jn. 2:24-25). Let us listen to John say it again in the Phillips Modern English translation. “For yourselves keep faithful to what you heard at the beginning. If you do, you will be living in fellowship with both **the Father** and the Son. And that means sharing his own life for ever, as he has promised.”

No longer are the children of Adam and Eve estranged from their heavenly Father. As the Son returns to his Father, so too does the believer now made a child of God. And so as not to forget that this is an awesome thing, beyond the human mind, we close St. John’s kaleidoscope with a glimpse into the royal throne room. “Those who prove victorious I will allow to share my throne, just as I was victorious myself and took my place with my Father on his throne” (Rev. 3:21). And might we add - close to his heart!

St. Paul and the Father

St. Paul's kaleidoscope colors are predominately blue and purple. In his letters he mentions **the Father** and **our Father**. Paul mentions the Father forty times and 35% of those appear in the salutation of his letters.

Every single letter of Paul makes mention of the Father in the salutation. "Grace and peace to you from God **our Father** and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:2). "May God **our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ send grace and peace" (Rom. 1:7). Notice the two gifts and the two Sources of those gifts. These two sets are contained in every one of Paul's salutations.

The Greek word for *grace* is *charis*. "In Paul *charis* is a central concept that most clearly expresses his understanding of the salvation event.... Specifically Pauline is the use of the word to expound the structure of the salvation event."⁴¹ *Charis* for Paul is free unmerited grace; it is a free gift; it is actualized in the cross of Christ. "The event of salvation is in itself orientated to the sinner and carries justification with it; hence it is received in faith.... The power of grace is displayed in its work, the overcoming of sin."⁴² In Deutero-Pauline epistles "*charis* means the Gospel, saving doctrine; to hear and perceive God's *charis* is to become a Christian."⁴³

The Greek word for *peace* is *eirene*. St. Paul uses it in his greetings in much the same way the Rabbis did using the Hebrew word *shalom*. It has a sense of well-being. The Rabbis use *shalom* for the gift of God to his people. It sums up the blessings of the Messianic period. In the New Testament *eirene*, when used in greetings and similar expressions, has the sense of well-being or salvation. The Risen Lord Jesus used this greeting when he appeared to his disciples: "Peace be with you" (Jn. 20:21).

This grace and peace come from both the Father and the Lord Jesus. "Grace and peace to you from God **our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 1:2). Paul frequently mentions both Father and Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is they who work out, bring about and effect our salvation.

One of the general principles, which St. Paul gives us, is in his first letter to the Corinthians. The Corinthians were idol worshippers and Paul would bring them to the true God. "There is one God, **the Father**, from whom all things come and for whom we exist; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we exist" (1Cor. 8:6). To the Ephesians St. Paul writes about the one Lord and one Father. "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is **Father** of all, over all, through all and within all" (Eph. 4:6).

In researching the name "Father" in Strong's Concordance I discovered two verses, which were given in St. Paul's letter to the Colossians and which I could not find in any of the translations I usually use. It turned out that these verses have "Father" in them only in the King James' version, which the Strong's Concordance uses. However, when I looked at the Greek text, the word for "Father" was not there; it had the word for "God."

This search caused me to look more closely at the two verses concerned. In so doing I thought that I would incorporate them into this kaleidoscope-look at the Father in St. Paul's

letters because they seemed to tie things together. First of all let me quote from Paul's letter to the Colossians. "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of **the Father**, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2).⁴⁴ What struck me here was the word "mystery", *mysterion* in Greek. The Greek word means *a secret which would remain such but for revelation; a matter to the knowledge of which initiation is necessary; a concealed power or principle; a hidden meaning of a symbol.*⁴⁵ The mystery is God's **secret** plan for his world, which is revealed in salvation history. "So that your understanding may come to full development, until you really know God's secret." And as the Phillips Modern English version expresses it: "How I long for them to experience the wealth of conviction which is brought by understanding - that they may come to know more fully God's great secret, Christ himself!"

In Christ the plan of God is fully revealed and realized. The heart of the mystery is this "manifestation" and "realization." The "manifestation" is made visible in Jesus Christ; the "realization" comes about because God does things, he makes them happen. The Church is a mystery in that it embodies and shows forth (manifestation) the saving presence and work of God (realization). The second quote speaks of Christ as head of the Church and the saving work effected by his death and resurrection. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased **the Father** that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself..." (Col. 1:18-20).⁴⁶

As I examined St. Paul's mention of the Father in his letters, for the most part I began to see a thread of sacramentology uniting the texts. Take for instance our new life in Christ. "When we were baptised we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by **the Father's** glory, we too might live a new life." (Rom. 6:4).

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul again speaks of the Father being the one to raise Christ from the dead. Note also the manifestation, "what is revealed" and the realization "how great is the power that he has exercised for us believers." "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father** of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers. This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand..." (Eph. 1:17).

Paul tells the Galatians that they are sons of God through faith in Christ. "You are, all of you, sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ...all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28). A few verses later he says it another way and gives an explanation as to what proves that those baptized into Christ are sons of God. Notice the revelation and manifestation. "When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law and to enable us to be adopted as sons. The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, "*Abba, Father,*" and it is this that makes you a son, you are not a slave any more; and if God has made you son, then he has made you

heir” (Gal. 4:4-7). In the text just quoted Paul uses “God” and not “Father.” However, it is obvious that it is the Father who sent the Son and it is the Father, who sent the Spirit of his Son.

Here we see a bit of Mark’s influence. St. Mark, also known as John Mark, assisted St. Paul in his apostolic work. Remember that St. Mark is the only evangelist to mention Jesus’ addressing the Father as “Abba” in the Garden of Olives. It is this crying out to God with words of intimacy in which one is moved by the Spirit, that proves one is a son/daughter/child of God.

Receiving the Spirit was closely linked with baptism in the early Church. In his letter to the Romans St. Paul again writes on this theme. “Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, ‘*Abba, Father!*’ The Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God. And if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory” (Rom. 8:14-17). With this mention of the Spirit we can also see the influence of St. Luke (or perhaps Luke was influenced by Paul). St. Luke accompanied Paul on his second and third missionary journeys and was with him during his two Roman captivities.

For Paul Christ Jesus brought about reconciliation through his cross. Through Christ and in the Spirit all can come to the Father. Note also his use of the word *peace* in the verse from Isaiah. “But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one.... This was to create one single New Man in himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the cross, to unite them both in a single Body and reconcile them with God. In his own person he killed the hostility. Later he came to bring the good news of peace, *peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near at hand*. Through him, both of us have in the one Spirit our way to come to **the Father**” (Eph. 2:13, 14, 15-17).

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, who formerly worshipped idols in their temples, and tells them that they are temples of the true and living God. They have been reconciled with God through Christ and should not return to their former way of life. If they persevere, they will be sons and daughters of God. “The temple of God has no common ground with idols, and that is what we are - the temple of the living God. We have God’s word for it: *I will make my home among them and live with them; I will be their God and they shall be my people. Then come away from them and keep aloof, says the Lord ... and I will welcome you and be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Almighty Lord*” (2Cor. 6:16-18).

Paul prays to the Father. Earlier we mentioned how St. Paul says that the Spirit prays in us crying out: “Abba, Father.” “This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before **the Father**, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name: Out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith...” (Eph. 3:14-17).

To the Corinthians he writes: “Blessed be the God and **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, a gentle **Father** and the God of all consolation, who comforts us in all our sorrows, so that we can offer others, in their sorrows, the consolation that we have received from God ourselves” (2 Cor. 1:3-4). The Greek word translated “blessed” is *eulogetos* and means *worthy of praise or blessing, blessed*. The Jerusalem bible translates *oiktirmon* as “gentle.” Most other transla-

tions render it in some form or description of mercy. However, the Greek word can mean “*compassion; kindness, in relieving sorrow and want; favour, grace, mercy.*”⁴⁷ How rich that word is and full of meaning, especially when one remembers and associates it with the “grace” in Paul’s greetings.

This seems to have a certain ring of Luke (Paul’s traveling companion) in it. Remember Luke telling us to “Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate” (Lk 6:36). Again in the story of the Samaritan, who fell among robbers, Jesus asks which proved neighbor to him. The answer was “The one who took pity on him” (Lk. 10:37). The Greek word *eleos* is used here and means “*pity, mercy, compassion; meton. [sic] benefit, which results from compassion, kindness, mercies, blessings.*”⁴⁸ But note Jesus’ response to the answer. “Go and do likewise” (Lk. 10:37). Basically that is what Paul is saying. What we have received from the Father we in turn are to give to others.

In his second letter to the Thessalonians St. Paul writes and mentions what the Father has given. “May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who has given us his love and, through his grace, such inexhaustible comfort and such sure hope, comfort you and strengthen you in everything good that you do or say” (2Thes. 2:16-17). The Revised Standard Versions reads: “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.” Again we see a kinship between St. Luke and St. Paul. In the Acts of the Apostles immediately before his ascension Jesus says: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). It is evident that St. Paul took this to heart. His travels are a witness to that. He was compelled to spread the message in person, by letter and through his assistants.

In the Gospel according to St. John we saw the theme of the Father sending the Son and the Son sending his disciples. In St. Paul’s letters we have a sense of the disciple himself becoming a father in and through Christ. “You might have thousands of guardians in Christ, but not more than one father and it was I who begot you in Christ Jesus by preaching the Good News. That is why I beg you to copy me and why I sent you Timothy, my dear and faithful son in the Lord: he will remind you of the way that I live in Christ, as I teach it everywhere in all the churches” (1Cor. 4:15-17). And again we see the theme of spiritual fatherhood in Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians: “You can remember how we treated every one of you as a father treats his children, teaching you what was right, encouraging you and appealing to you to live a life worthy of God, who is calling you to share the glory of his kingdom” (1Thes. 2:11-12). To Philemon Paul writes: “I am appealing to you for a child of mine, whose father I became while wearing these chains” (Phil 10).

Paul prays to the Father and in his prayer we catch glimpses of the “manifestation” and “realization” of the mystery in the lives of believers. He thanks the Father for the believers and for their faith in action. “We always thank God for you all, and mention you in our prayers continually. We call to mind, before our God and Father, how your faith has shown itself in action, your love in labour, and your hope of our Lord Jesus Christ in fortitude” (1Thes. 1:2-3).⁴⁹ The Jerusalem Bible has: “constantly remember before God our Father how you have shown your faith in action, worked for love and persevered through hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ.” To the Colossians Paul writes: “We have never failed to remember you in our prayers and to

give thanks for you to God, **the Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, ever since we heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you show toward all the saints because of the hope which is stored up for you in heaven” (Col. 1:3--5).

Paul exhorts the Colossians to express the gratitude in their hearts and to thank God the Father through Christ. We also see him encouraging them to pass on the message they have been given through teaching and admonishing. “Always be thankful. Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God **the Father** through him” (Col. 3:15-17).

We also see some snippets of themes from the Lord’s prayer in Paul’s writings, which mention the Father in them. We see the “will of God **our Father**” mentioned in the opening of his letter to the Galatians. “We wish you the grace and peace of God **our Father** and of the Lord Jesus Christ, who in order to rescue us from this present wicked world sacrificed himself for our sins, in accordance with the will of God **our Father**, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Gal. 1:3-5). Christ Jesus, the Son of God, has carried out the Father’s will. Paul prays that the Colossians will do so too. “We have never failed to pray for you, and what we ask God is that through perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding you should reach the fullest knowledge of his will. So you will be able to lead the kind of life which the Lord expects of you...” (Col. 1:9-10).

Through Christ the Father has delivered us from the power of sin and death and created a place for us in the kingdom. He has forgiven us our sins and given us all we need to overcome temptation. “You will have in you the strength, based on his own glorious power, never to give in, but to bear anything joyfully, thanking **the Father** who has made it possible for you to join the saints and with them to inherit the light. Because that is what he has done: he has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins” (Col. 1:11-14).

In St. John’s Gospel there is a mutual glorification of Father and Son. In St. Paul glory is given to the Father in and through Christ. Again we have the sacramental theme of Christ as head of the Body, the Church, and ourselves incorporated into him as his members. “And may he who helps us when we refuse to give up, help you all to be tolerant with each other, following the example of Christ Jesus, so that united in mind and voice you may give glory to the God and **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5-6). The Phillips Modern English translation has: “And then, as one man, you will sing from the heart the praises of God **the Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ. So open your hearts to one another as Christ has opened his heart to you, and God will be glorified” (Rom. 15:6).

The Father has given the Lord Jesus the name above all other names that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father and it is in honoring the Son that glory is given to the Father. “God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that *all beings* in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, *should bend the knee* at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God **the Father** (Phil. 2:9-11). After all is accomplished at the end time Christ will hand over the kingdom to God the Father from whom all things come. “After that will come the end, when he hands over the

kingdom to God **the Father...**" (1 Cor. 15:24). And we close Paul's kaleidoscope with the words he closes his letter to the Philippians: "Glory to God, **our Father**, for ever and ever" (Phil. 4:20).

The Author of the Letter to the Hebrews and the Father

The author of the letter to the Hebrews does not readily use the name "Father." In his prologue he speaks of "God" speaking to us "by a Son," as the Revised Standard Version has it, or "in the Son" as the New English Bible translates it. He does not say that it is the Father speaking to us.

The word "father" appears only two times in this letter. One of those times is at the beginning of the letter. The author asks a rhetorical question and this use of "father" is a quote from the Old Testament. "For to what angel did God ever say, 'Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee'? Or again, 'I will be to him a **father**, and he shall be to me a son'?" (Heb. 1:5).⁵⁰ In one excerpt he quotes from the Old Testament in reference to the Son saying: "But of the Son he says, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee...' (Heb. 1:8-9).

In all fairness to the author it should be noted that the main focus of his letter is on the priesthood of Christ. Christ is priest and victim, who comes to do God's will. "And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10).⁵¹ He counsels Christians saying: "For you need endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised" (Heb. 10:36).⁵² Here we see the Christian following in the footsteps of Christ.

Speaking of Christ, the author tells us that "Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation..." (Heb. 5:8-9). For the author it seems that God the Father is a disciplinarian of a sort but he is so because he loves his children. "Have you forgotten that encouraging text in which you are addressed as sons? *My son, when the Lord corrects you, do not treat it lightly ... For the Lord trains the ones that he loves and he punishes all those that he acknowledges as his sons.* Suffering is part of your *training*; God is treating you as his *sons* ... Besides, we have all had our human fathers who punished us, and we respected them for it; we ought to be even more willing to submit ourselves to **our spiritual Father**, to be given life" (Heb. 12:5-7, 9). While the discipline may seem to have a negative connotation one must keep in mind the love behind it and the end in view, i.e., life. We have a loving Father, who disciplines us, so that we might have life with him eternally.

St. James and the Father

As I read the passages in the letter of St. James that mention the Father, I began to see words and thoughts that reminded me of the book of Genesis and creation. For instance words such as: "good", "light", "made" "created." Let us look at St. James' first mention of "Father." "It is all that is good, everything that is perfect, which is given us from above; it comes down

from **the Father** of all light; with him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow of a change. By his own choice he made us his children by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all that he had created" (James 1:17).

St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that creation is a work of the Trinity. "To create belongs to God according to His being, that is, His essence, which is common to the three Persons. Hence to create is not proper to any one Person, but is common to the whole Trinity."⁵³ But St. Thomas also goes on to say that we attribute creation to the Father. We profess this every time we recite the Creed. "We believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

Notice the creation parallels in those words of St. James, which are mentioned above. "All that is good" in James and "God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:10,12,18,21,25), and "God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). James also mentions "everything that is perfect" and in Genesis we see creation taking place over seven days, seven being the "perfect" number in biblical thought. James also says "given from above" and in Genesis we read that "God's spirit hovered over the water" (Gen. 1:2), i.e., above the water. James also says that "it comes from the Father of light" and again in Genesis the first words God speaks creates light. "God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). One can draw other parallels with "making man in his own image," (see Gen. 1:26) "Be fruitful" (Gen. 1:28), and Abel offering God the firstborn (first-fruits) of his flock (see Gen. 4:4).

In James' letter we can also see the theme of doing good and avoiding evil. It involves making a choice. Adam and Eve had a choice to make and we all know the outcome. James follows through on this theme. Above we read: "By his own choice he made us his children..." (James 1:17). Later he says: "Pure, unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God **our Father** is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world" (James 1:27). A pure, unspoilt offering is doing good to another, particularly to one who cannot pay you back. It is something positive in action, it gives life and perhaps brings a ray of light to brighten someone's life. The second half of James' formula is one of prevention. It equates to not making bad choices and sinning, not allowing oneself to be influenced by the temptations that assail one.

St. James is well aware that we are weak children of Adam. He says: "Every one of us does something wrong, over and over again" (James 3:2). He zooms in on the tongue and its use. "Among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a whole wicked world in itself" (James 3:6). That's really strong language! Imagine - a whole wicked world. He continues: "It infects the whole body; catching fire itself from hell, it sets fire to the whole wheel of creation" (James 3:6). Again we think of creation and God's creatures as James continues: "Wild animals and birds, reptiles and fish can all be tamed by man, and often are" (James 3:7). God, who made man in his own image gave him dominion. "Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26). "But," James says, "nobody can tame the tongue - it is a pest that will not keep still, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8). Does that sound like the serpent? St. James continues: "We use it (the tongue) to bless the Lord and **Father**, but we also use it to curse men who are made in God's image: the blessing and the curse come out of the same mouth" (James 3:9). There is a choice to make. Adam and Eve had a choice; Cain and Abel had a choice and we, too, have choices to make. We can make that good choice by the grace of God.

In his final exhortation St. James reminds the faithful that the “Lord is kind and compassionate” (James 5:11). He advises the weak to “confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, and this will cure you; the heartfelt prayer of a good man works very powerfully” (James 5:16).

St. James closes his letter not with a blessing but with a final word of direction and encouragement. “My brothers, if one of you strays away from the truth, and another brings him back to it, he may be sure that anyone who can bring back a sinner from the wrong way that he has taken will be saving a soul from death and *covering a great number of sins*” (James 5:19-20). You are your brother’s keeper and your sister’s too! We are all children, in St. James’ words, of “God our Father” (James 1:27).

St. Peter and the Father

St. Peter is Trinitarian in the greeting of his letter. His greeting also has the theme of being chosen, redeemed and sanctified. “Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, sends greetings to all those ... who have been chosen, by the provident purpose of God **the Father**, to be made holy by the Spirit, obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood. Grace and peace be with you more and more” (1 Pt. 1:1-2). For Peter, the Father is a provident Father. He knows what we need and provides for us. The Greek word, translated here as *provident*, is *prognosis*. It means *foreknowledge, prescience*; in the N.T., *previous determination, purpose*. Its root word is the verb *proginosko*, which means *to know beforehand, to be previously acquainted with; to determine on beforehand, to fore-ordain*; in N.T., from the Hebrew, *to foreknow, to appoint as the subjects of future privileges*.⁵⁴

Following his greeting, Peter begins the letter proper with an exclamatory prayer of blessing. Excitable Peter is excited to give the message and his sentence is so long in the Greek text that the translators have broken it up into two sentences! I give the Revised Standard Version translation here because you can get the sense of the non-stop-speaking Peter. But keep in mind that there is only a comma and not an exclamation point in the Greek text making it all one sentence. “Blessed be the God and **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pt. 1:3-5). That was fifty-three words long in the Greek text! And sixty-seven in this Revised Standard Version! I wonder what his English or Greek teacher thinks! Peter is almost breathless in giving the message. It just flows out of him.

Here we see that it is by the Father’s great mercy that we are born anew, through the resurrection of his Son from the dead. As sons of God we have an inheritance waiting for us in the heavens. Our gaze must be directed heavenward, to our true home, where the Father waits for us.

The Father knows all our thoughts, words and deeds. Peter tells us that It is according to our deeds that we will be judged by the Father. “If you are acknowledging as your Father one who has no favorites and judges everyone according to what he has done, you must be scrupulously careful as long as you are living away from your home” (1 Pt. 1:17). Peter almost sounds like a father writing to his son away at college. At that age one can make mistakes and

get into mischief. Peter made mistakes too and experienced his own weaknesses. The Father foreknew that Peter would get himself into deep water (Mt. 14:30), and would deny his Son, Jesus. Peter, himself, had a sense of self-knowledge and cried out: "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Lk. 5:8). Nevertheless Peter was a man "chosen and destined by God **the Father**" (1 Pt. 1:2). Far from being rejected by God for his weaknesses he was reestablished as leader of the flock. And that came with a threefold confession of love. "Do you love me... yes, Lord...feed my sheep" (Jn. 21:17). So it is no wonder then that Peter, who received mercy as a son, in turn writes: "You have been given mercy" (1Pt. 2:10). We might say that St. Peter was born anew at his threefold profession of love. "Now that you have, by obeying the truth, made your souls clean enough for a genuine love of your fellows, see that you do love each other, fervently and from the heart. For you are not just mortals now but sons of God..." (1 Pt. 1:22-23).⁵⁵

St. Peter tells us that the Father "has no favorites" (1 Pt. 1:17). For the college student that might mean that it doesn't matter if you belong to this or that sorority, are the most popular student or come from a wealthy family. You are not a favorite with God the Father because of your clothes, your car or any position of fame or prestige. What the Father judges you by are your deeds. And so St. Peter directs: "Always behave honorably...so that they can see your good works..." (1 Pt. 2:12). "Be sympathetic; love the brothers, have compassion and be self-effacing. Never pay back one wrong with another, or an angry word with another one; instead, pay back with a blessing. That is what you are called to do, so that you inherit a blessing yourself" (1 Pt. 3:8-9). In the Bible the father's blessing went to the firstborn son. It was his inheritance. So to inherit a blessing from God the Father is to be someone very special.

Read what St. Peter writes about Jesus, the Son of the Father, in his second letter. "He was honoured and glorified by God **the Father**, when the Sublime Glory itself spoke to him and said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour.' We heard this ourselves, spoken from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain" (2 Pt. 1:17-18). What St. Matthew adds to this is the Father's advice: "Listen to him" (Mt. 17:5). To be beloved sons and daughters of God our Father, we do well to listen to Jesus and follow his lead.

St. Jude and the Father

St. Jude's letter is the shortest of all the epistles. His only mention of the Father is in the greeting of his letter. "From Jude, servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James; to those who are called, to those who are dear to God **the Father** and kept safe for Jesus Christ, wishing you all mercy and peace and love (Jude 1:1-2).

St. Jude is the patron of hopeless cases. He had hoped to write "about the salvation that we all share." (Jude 1:3). But says that "I have been forced to write to you now and appeal to you.... Certain people have infiltrated among you..." (Jude 1:3-4). The bulk of his letter is a warning that they not be led astray.

He closes his letter saying: "Glory be to him who can keep you from falling and bring you safe to his glorious presence, innocent and happy. To God, the only God, who saves us through Jesus Christ our Lord..." (Jude 1:24-25). It would seem that God here refers to the Father "who saves us through Jesus Christ." Because believers are so dear to God the Father,

Jude was solicitous that they not lose the mercy, peace and love that the Father is always ready to extend to those who turn to him.

A Last Glance at the Father

In this study we have looked at the Father through the eyes of each evangelist. Each has something special to show us. If we look at each one as if he were the only one we had to tell us about the Father, how limited our view of the Father would be. But as it is, we have a kaleidoscope-view of the Father as seen in the New Testament. How rich and beautiful it is.

St. Mark has shown us how Jesus called the Father "**Abba**" (Mk. 14:36), the equivalent of our "Daddy." St. Matthew tells us about "**Our Father in heaven**" (Mt. 6:9). "**Your heavenly Father**" is a forgiving Father (Mt. 6:14) and he "will reward you" (Mt. 6:18). St. Luke tells us that "**your Father** is compassionate" (Lk. 6:36) and that **the Father** promised to send the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4). St. John brought out Christ's oneness or union with **the Father** (Jn. 10:30, 38) and in St. John's gospel Jesus frequently says: "**my Father**" (Jn. 14:20). St. Paul describes **the Father** as a gentle Father (2Cor. 1:3). He also tells us that the Spirit makes us cry out: "**Abba Father!**" (Rom. 8:15). The author of the letter to the Hebrews writes of "**our spiritual Father**" (Heb. 12:9) as one who disciplines us out of love. For St. James he is "**the Father** of all light" (James 1:17). St. Peter speaks of **the Father** as **your Father**, "who has no favorites but judges everyone according to what he has done" (2 Pt. 1:17). St. Jude, brief as he is, tells us that we are "dear to God **the Father**" (Jude 1).

It is St. John who tells us that his Name is **Father**. "I have made your name known..." (Jn. 17:1,4-6). In St. Matthew's Gospel Jesus teaches the disciples to pray: "**Our Father...**" (Mt. 6:9ff). St. Luke also gives us the Lord's prayer: "**Father,...**" (Lk. 11:2ff). Some of the evangelists specify what it is that makes us sons and daughters of God our Father. St. Matthew says: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of **your Father in heaven**" (Mt. 5:44). St. Luke has a rather detailed formula: "Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly.... Love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High..." (Lk. 6:27,28,35). St. Paul tells us: "you are, all of you, sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ,..." (Gal. 3:26-27). For St. John it is believing and loving that make us children of God. "Whoever **believes** that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever **loves the Father** that begot him loves the child whom he begets. We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us; this is what loving God is - keeping his commandments..." (1 Jn. 5:1-3). "My dear people, let us love one another since love comes from God and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God..." (1 Jn. 4:7).

I can't help but think of Joseph of the Old Testament, the beloved of his father, who was given a coat of many colors. When he revealed himself to his brothers they were afraid but Joseph said: "Come closer to me...I am your brother.... God...has made me father..." (Gen. 45:4, 5, 8).

St. Matthew is the evangelist through whom Jesus tells us: “Anyone who does the will of **my Father** in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother (Mt. 12:50). “Through him, (Christ) both of us have in the one Spirit our way to come to **the Father**” (Eph. 2:13, 14, 15-17). ***Come, come to the Father! Come closer.***

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NOTES

1. The bold/italic emphasis (“**Father**”) throughout this paper indicates direct address by Jesus to the Father. In quoting from scripture texts using the word “Father,” I will be using other coded styles for emphasis, explained as they occur.
2. A double underline will be used in this paper within scripture quotes to emphasize the use of “his Father.”
3. Bold type will be used in this paper within scripture quotes to emphasize the use of “**the Father.**”
4. A single underline will be used in this paper within scripture quotes to emphasize the use of “your Father” and a shadow effect will be used to emphasize “in heaven” or “heavenly” Father.
5. *The Six Version Parallel New Testament*. Revised Standard Version. (Carol Stream: Creation House, 1974).
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Bold and underline will be used in this paper within scripture quotes to emphasize the use of **my Father.**
10. Bold, double underline and caps are used to emphasize the use of **ONE FATHER** but do not appear so in the scripture text..
11. Revised Standard Version.
12. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*. Ed. Harold K. Moulton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 2.
13. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 182.
14. Barclay 183-185.
15. A gray highlight emphasizes the use of “**Our Father**” within scripture quotes in this paper.
16. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*. Ed. Harold K. Moulton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 302.
17. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* 302.
18. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* 277.
19. See Jerusalem Bible Matthew 16:27 footnote o.
20. See Jerusalem Bible Matthew 25:34 footnote g.
21. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Ed. Gerhard Kittel. Ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10th ed., 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), vol. V, p. 159-160.
22. Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*, 26th printing (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 238. Retold in *Tramp for the Lord* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1974), pp. 55-57.
23. See *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 302.
24. See *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 96.
25. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (New York, NY: Image Books, Doubleday, 1992).
26. Revised Standard Version.

27. Revised Standard Version translation.
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42. *Ibid.*, p. 395.
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See What Love the Father Has!

Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, O.P.
Marbury, AL

During this final year of preparation for the Third Millennium, our thoughts have been dwelling on God our Father, Creator of heaven and earth - the first Principle from whom all things come and to whom all things return - and "whose unconditional love for every human creature is discovered anew each day."¹ We have sought then to apply this meditation to our own Dominican vocation.

Trinitarian Love

God created mankind out of love and in his own image and likeness. He gave them the task "to share together as ministers of God's omnipotence in the making of new immortal beings and to help them to grow up in God's likeness and lead them safely to God."² The Father established "Adam as priest and ruler over all creation"³ and commissioned him to provide for his family. For this purpose man was given primacy in the order of knowledge (authority), which placed him in a state of holy liberty and enabled him to see all Creation in its proper relationship with God.⁴ Woman, on the other hand, was given primacy in the order of love,⁵ which enabled her to be more attuned to the sense of unity in the human family. Eve, as the mother of the living, was to fulfill this office by teaching her children how to love and leading them to the love of the Father.⁶

By creating mankind in his own image and likeness and in the "unity of the two" God revealed to them not only their task to "exist mutually for each other"⁷ but also their call to live in friendship with himself. God wished mankind to respond to his gift of himself to them with the free gift of themselves to God. By asking them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he wished to remind mankind that they were creatures and that they must be dependent upon God their Creator, the source of all truth and goodness.⁸ Thus they were asked to submit their intellects and wills to God in the "obedience of faith."⁹

Deceived by the "father of lies" however, Adam and Eve began to see God not as their Father but as an enemy. Succumbing to this temptation, Eve chose her own will over God's and brought evil into the world,¹⁰ while Adam out of fear of death, put all his descendants into life long slavery to the one who has the power of death.¹¹ This act not only destroyed their communion with God, but their unity with each other.

Despite their rejection of him, God did not turn his back on mankind. He continued to seek them out and to reveal himself to them, though in a veiled manner. When the time came for the Father to send his Son into the world, he established Christ as High Priest so that he could restore unity and dignity to creation.¹² It was the mission of Jesus to reveal to mankind the full mystery of the Father's love for them and his desire for union with them. He accomplished this and freed mankind from slavery by accepting death on the cross in obedience to and love for the Father. Since it was in the divine plan that this renewal of all creation should include the restoration of the original good - "the unity of the two" - the Father willed that Mary, the Mother of Christ, should cooperate fully in the mystery of redemption.¹³ By offering their "obedience of faith" to the Father, Jesus and Mary were able to bring forth new children unto him.

“When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth was accomplished,”¹⁴ the Holy Spirit was sent upon the new-born Church. Being the bond of love between the Father and the Son, “the Holy Spirit is the one who brings about the continuation of their work.”¹⁵ He communicates to us the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us by the Son. To accomplish his mission of uniting us to the Son and thus making us in Christ the adopted sons of God, he must first convince us of the reality of sin, which destroys both unity between men and the inner harmony in man. After convincing man of his own sinfulness, the Holy Spirit then directs him toward what is good - to the source of goodness - the Father. Then we are enabled to cry out: *Abba! Father!* and begin our journey back to him.¹⁶ It is through the Holy Spirit that the Son always leads us back to the Father. Their missions are separate and distinct yet intimately joined together for the same end.¹⁷

“By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love....”¹⁸ “In the order of love the Father is the primary principle and the last end.... The Father is rapt in love, and gives himself to the Son simultaneously as he begets him. And the Son is rapt in love and gives himself to his Father simultaneously as he is begotten.... Thus it is that the Holy Spirit, their common love, is the Gift that the Father and the Son give to each other - the breath of love that binds them to one another.”¹⁹ It is this “gift of one Person to the Other in total mutual openness”²⁰ that God calls all mankind to imitate and reflect. For this purpose God gives us the Holy Spirit, the first Gift, who possesses us. Through the Holy Spirit the Father gives us his Son, who takes flesh in us mystically. Together they form in us that aspiration to the Father which leads us back to him. This aspiration causes us to seek and choose only that which will please the Father.²¹

Marian Love

In Mary we see this call fulfilled to perfection. Immersed in the Father’s infinite love for herself and for all mankind and intimately united to the Holy Spirit as her Spouse, she freely offered the total gift of herself to the Father in order to accomplish his will. In exchange the Trinity gave itself completely to Mary. The Holy Spirit brought to her the divine fecundity of the Father and the Son descended into her womb and was made flesh. In her *Magnificat*, Mary “undoes the lies sown in the heart of Eve” and “boldly proclaims the undimmed truth about God.”²²

Our Lady’s motherhood of all became ever more imbued with a burning charity for others and reached a “definite maturity on Calvary.”²³ At the foot of the cross, Mary united the total gift of herself to her Son’s total gift of himself to the Father and thus together they accomplished the “restoration of supernatural life to souls.”²⁴ As the true Mother of all mankind, she “summons the faithful to her Son and his sacrifice and to the love of the Father.”²⁵ There she continues to offer to us the “love which burst forth from the heart of Jesus dying on the Cross as he sent forth his Spirit.”²⁶ It is through Mary that the Holy Spirit brings “men into communion with Christ.”²⁷

Dominican Apostolic Love

From this Trinitarian mystery springs our own unique Dominican charism “to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ, the gospel of the Father, to all mankind.”²⁸ Entering into this mysterious exchange of love by contemplation, the Dominican strives to bring all other souls into its embrace. Dominic - like to the Lord Jesus - was but one aspiration to the Father. As the Eternal Father told St. Catherine of Siena: “Dominic, My son by adoption, followed My Will

in all things...and...preached to the world the truth of My words.... He took up the task of My Word, My only-begotten Son"...and sought "only the glory and praise of My Name and the salvation of souls." It was through and with Mary that the Father sent Dominic "into the mystical body of the Church"²⁹ to continue undoing the lies sown in the heart of mankind by the "father of lies."

We can see many ways in which St. Dominic was like Jesus. Just as Jesus spent his nights in prayer and his days in speaking only what the Father had given him to speak, so St. Dominic spent his nights in prayer and his days in speaking only "to God or of God." So impressed were Jesus disciples with his familiarity with his Father, that they asked him to teach them how to pray. Likewise we find some of St. Dominic's followers watching him in prayer that they may pray like him. As Jesus entrusted his small band of Apostles to his Mother before sending them out two by two,³⁰ so St Dominic sent forth his small band of men, two by two, on the feast of Mary's Assumption. Finally, just as Jesus associated his Mother with his work of redemption and entrusted the new-born Church to her care, so likewise St. Dominic associated the Nuns with his work of Holy Preaching and entrusted the continued growth of the new Order to their care.

It is in the word **associate** that we find the heart of our Dominican vocation. To associate means to unite as companions. Blessed Hyacinth Cormier says that just as Adam had a helpmate in Eve, so St. Dominic saw the Nuns as his helpmates.³¹ It would seem more accurate to say that Dominic had in mind the second Adam and the second Eve - Jesus and Mary. By uniting the gift of themselves through the Holy Spirit in "the original good, the 'unity of the two,'" Jesus and Mary carried out the work of the Father. Similarly it seems that this was the basis of St. Dominic's marvelous vision of an Order where men and women work together for the common goal of the salvation of souls.

Dominic's ideal of the "union of hearts"³² between the Friars and the Nuns can be seen in many of the stories of our early history. But it is Blessed Cecilia's story of St. Dominic and the wine that seems to best exemplify this. In this story Dominic had both the Brethren present with him, as well as the Nuns, drink freely from the same cup of wine that remained full no matter how much they drank from it.³³ Wine was often seen as a symbol of love since, like wine, it has the power to lift a person above the troubles of this world. By this example it seems that St. Dominic wished to impress upon all his children that they must drink freely from the same source of love in order that their family unity might flourish and grow. This source of love we know is found in the Eucharist and in the word, both of which the Friars provide for the Nuns. As Blessed Jordan later reminded the Nuns at St. Agnes, "Jesus the Bridegroom brings us into his wine cellar.... He is the bond whereby we are bound together.... Let us love one another in him and through him and for him...."³⁴

In his Libellus,³⁵ Blessed Jordan describes how St. Dominic received the charism of the Apostolic preaching. Many times after a long, frustrating and seemingly fruitless day of work, he would return to the Monastery of Prouille for rest and to gain new courage and energy to continue. Surely there Dominic discovered that mysterious "relationship between the eager silence of the contemplative and the consoling word of the apostle."³⁶ Pondering on his own mission to continue the work of the Apostles, he must have reflected on the role of Our Lady in their work.

On Pentecost, the Spirit of Love had implanted his contemplative activity in the souls of Mary and the Apostles. Mary received it and dwelt in the silence of love. The Apostles received it, left the Cenacle and began to speak. Therefore the life of prayer and the life of

preaching come from the one, same source.³⁷ It was in this way that the missions of the Holy Spirit and of the Son were continued in the Church. In the same way, Dominic must have realized, the Order was to continue these missions.

The Gift of Self in Love

By accepting the Father's will in the 'obedience of faith' Dominicans offer the complete gift of themselves in a spousal love for Christ. The Holy Spirit then brings them the fecundity of the Father and the Word takes flesh in them mystically. When they reach maturity at the foot of the cross, the Father then sends upon them the Spirit who implants his contemplative activity in their souls and leads them into their mission of continuing the work of Mary and the Apostles.

In order to carry out their mission both the Nuns and the Friars must contribute the complete gift of self which consists in that which is most essential to the nature of man and woman. In the natural order the complete gift of a man and woman is to each other in marriage. The fruit of this giving is the gift of a child. Thus fatherhood and motherhood are linked to the personal structure of mankind and to the personal dimension of the gift of themselves.³⁸ In the Gospel Jesus reveals a new, spiritual parenthood. There Christ teaches us in regard to the person's exclusive gift of themselves to God that "virginity becomes the principle of spiritual fatherhood and motherhood and transmits life not for a time but for all eternity."³⁹

Fatherhood in the act of human generation is the means by which a man gives his own specific nature to the child he has begotten. In reality it is God the Father who is "the first Father of all that exists" and the one who gives man his true life.⁴⁰ For this purpose God began to establish with mankind in the Garden a covenant or family relationship. This Covenant was always mediated by a priest and renewed by sacrifice. Before God instituted the Aaronite priesthood, this priestly office was exercised by the father of the family and handed down to a son chosen by God (e.g. Isaac, Jacob, etc.)⁴¹ The death of Jesus, the one true Priest, on the cross is a true act of fatherhood because it was in this way that he communicated our true spiritual life through the new Eve.⁴²

Accepting the Father's call to the ministerial priesthood, the Friar becomes the living and transparent image of Christ the Priest and receives from it his "spiritual fatherhood for transmitting the life of grace to souls."⁴³ He imparts this life primarily through preaching and the administration of the sacraments. Entering into Christ's self-emptying by sacrificing his own thoughts, feelings, and words, the Friar, like Christ, will speak only the words given to him by the Father. This more perfect union with the Divine Logos⁴⁴ enables him to offer true worship to the Father and through the celebration of the Eucharist to restore to the Father the whole of creation.⁴⁵ Exercising his authority in the spirit of self-sacrifice as did the Good Shepherd, the Friar continually lays down his life for souls, sometimes even unto death.

Accepting the cloister as the Father's choice for her, the Nun offers to him in response the gift of her virginity and thereby shares in Our Lady's spiritual motherhood of souls. Together with her she exists in a unique relationship with the Holy Spirit who makes her virginity fruitful. In the hidden silence of the cloister, the Nun offers up the sacrifices involved in the emptying herself of the natural desire to be useful and busy in order to sit at the feet of Jesus. Then Christ will be able to open up his heart and pour into her heart his burning desires for the salvation of souls. He will share with her a sense of responsibility for the weight of the sins of the world which he bore on the cross. By keeping her eyes always on the love of the Father

and accepting with joy the events and problems of daily life, this “pouring out of herself” will then become fruitful for the sake of others.⁴⁶

“Keep high festival, and give thanks to the Giver of all good things, for the God of mercy and compassion has now been pleased to visit the earth and has plentifully watered it....”⁴⁷ According to a beautiful legend, Our Lady told St. Dominic that his preaching was not bearing fruit because the ground was still dry and hard. First, she explained, the ground must be watered by prayer, in particular the Angelic Salutation.⁴⁸ The first task of the Nuns then is to prepare souls to receive the seed of the word preached by their brothers. “Do not cease imploring the Holy Spirit to touch the hearts of our listeners,”⁴⁹ Blessed Jordan frequently asked the Nuns. But their task does not end here because these same souls “must be powerfully helped, now and henceforth by your prayers.”⁵⁰ Just as a mother must continue to nurture her child after it is born, so the Nuns by their prayers and holy life continue to nurture the new life of grace in souls. They “must join with Mary in throwing the mantle of her care over all the human family...and in bringing that family back to God.”⁵¹

Supporting One Another in Love

The fact that St. Dominic frequently brought the Friars with him on his visits to the Nuns leads us to think that he believed that direct contact with the Nuns would have a great influence on the brethren themselves. In the first place he knew from personal experience that “cloisters are in the first place a source of preaching by their silence....” He knew also the effects that contemplative souls had on the preacher himself - how their simple faith would “sustain his own, their thirst for truth would awaken and stimulate his mind.”⁵²

Secondly, if Dominic regarded the Nuns as “his helpmates” he must have realized that “women hold an essential place in the life of a priest. It is important that the priest should develop deep within himself the image of women as sisters...who by their selflessness”⁵³ “pour themselves out...for the sake of all people who are embraced by the love of Christ the Spouse.”⁵⁴ As one of the early chroniclers of the Order tells us: “These handmaids of Christ...by the excellence of their lives...give an example to others....”⁵⁵ And Blessed Jordan writes to the Nuns: “The thought of you all rejoices my heart, beloved daughters, since I know how eagerly, in unity together, you walk with the Lord, seeking nothing save him in whom alone is your sufficiency....”⁵⁶

“The mission of woman is not merely a passive, expiatory one, it is the active mission of the leadership of love.... It is the destiny of all those who share in Mary’s vocation of spiritual motherhood...to form man by her active leadership into the likeness of Christ; to help him return to the source of love and knowledge.... The essence of the leadership of love is that she must be that in which God is revealed. It’s essential method of teaching is not to expound, to reason, or to demonstrate to the mind....” Rather it is by her example of being God’s handmaid and accepting all that God’s wills, that she leads men to God.⁵⁷

Furthermore, although woman “finds herself by giving love to others,”⁵⁸ she is also the one who “makes man know himself more fully....”⁵⁹ This is because “woman’s motherhood presents a special call and a special challenge to the man and his fatherhood.”⁶⁰ Thus the example of the Nuns who devote themselves to the “one thing necessary” should incite the Friars to greater zeal in their apostolic work of “bringing forth to Christ and His Church, children of God destined for salvation.”⁶¹

These three years of preparation spent in re-examining our own “lives and vocations in the light of the mystery of Redemption”⁶² have fostered in us a profound sense of commitment to the ideals that St. Dominic has set before us. We pray especially that the grace of this Jubilee - “that the mystery of Redemption should become particularly present and fruitful”⁶³ in our own lives. Then we will truly become “an example to others, a joy to the angels, and pleasing to God.”⁶⁴

✠

NOTES

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6. Vann, *Heart*, p. 42.
7. *Mulieris Dignitatem*, # 2.
8. Pope John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, #33-36.
9. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #143.
10. Vann, *Heart*, p. 42.
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13. Pope John Paul II, *Mary's Cooperation in the Sacrifice*, May 4, 1983.
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15. CCC, #689.
16. Cf. *Dominum*, #33-42.
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22. *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #11.
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46. LCM, #1.II.
47. Letters, #4.
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**A VESPERS HOMILY
for the First Sunday of Advent (A)**

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Advent! So much to think about!

If there is a predominant word, a predominant idea and image in this season just beginning, it is: COMING. One who is coming. "The King is coming, and with Him all His saints."

That is just the reverse of a prominent image in the readings from Luke which we have been doing lately: the image of "the journey," the GOING-AWAY. That theme was operative in the passage we were reading the last time I presided at the Divine Office: even the meal with Martha and Mary was just a moment of rest from the road for a man who is going away - a man who has just talked exodus on the mountain with the elders and who is now on the road, going up to Jerusalem, going away.

Any of us might well say that a strong thread in our community experience, this past year, has been departures, goings-away. Going away in death (*four* deaths!), going away in transfer, going away in volunteering for a Foundation. Even a blessed return pointed to the going-away that underlay it. Going away for retreat, for study. The going-away of chaplains, including temporary ones quickly become beloved. And we have accompanied in our hearts the nuns of Nicaragua who, because of hurricane floods, are on the verge of going away from their neighbors of a dozen years in León.

We have had ample, insistent invitation to ponder the reality, the experience, of departure. So, on our way into Advent, with its insistence on COME, can we still ask: What is this contrary experience of going away? What is its "voice"? What does it tell us about ourselves and about God?

You know the answer that is already present in your own contemplative awareness. What I can do is point out the insistent question, as I have just been doing, and go on to share an answer that has been forming for me.



Suppose we focus for a minute on some vivid image of going-away. Say, a human figure half-turned. Either: standing facing us, but with the head, the gaze, the attention, already turned away, already going from us. Or: the whole body already going away, but just now turning back with head and shoulders, to catch a last glimpse of the place s/he has already left.

A poet helps us to catch that image perfectly:

WHO HAS TWISTED US LIKE THIS SO THAT -
NO MATTER WHAT WE DO - WE HAVE THE BEARING
OF A PERSON GOING AWAY? AS ON THE LAST HILL
THAT SHOWS HIM ALL HIS VALLEY FOR THE LAST TIME,
A MAN TURNS, STANDS STILL, AND LINGERS, SO WE LIVE,
FOREVER SAYING FAREWELL.

- Rilke, Duino Elegy 8

I have asked myself often throughout the past year: What light does the Gospel shine on the fact that we seem to "live / forever saying farewell"? The image the poet evoked for us so powerfully - that figure half turned away - can it become for us an icon, a *sacred* image?

For me, the answer is yes. It is the basic stance of Jesus to be *turned toward* the Father. It is for this reason, it is toward this "place" that is the Father, that he is going away.

Decades ago my attention was called to the surprising fact that the "De profundis," ("Out of the depths....") is one of the psalms of Christmas-Day Vespers. Hear it as a prayer of Jesus to the Father: "Out of the depths of my man experience, I cry to you, my God....Lord, hear my voice." Jesus, to the Father: "As the watchman watches in the night for dawn, so do I watch for you." One day, Jesus will give a last look at this valley of ours which he is leaving. Luke, evangelist of Jesus' journey, of his going-away, is also evangelist of the Ascension.

What I am suggesting is that all our painful experiences of departures, of persons' going away, not only image our "exile from the heavenly homeland" (as we are likely to say) but can also be for us icons of God: icons in which the Son is in a sense always going away because he is turned toward the Father who dwells in light inaccessible.



But what of Advent, then?

Well, it is the *coming* of the Lord - and the "second coming" of the Lord Jesus - that we now propose to celebrate: Jesus coming straight toward us, with all his saints. Look! No longer turned away, but coming straight and fully toward us! Like a Byzantine icon! Turned straight toward us!

No longer, then, is Jesus turned toward the Father, in the Spirit? Yes, he is fully turned toward the Father. *And* toward *us*. Because that is where the Father is: with us in our valley. We catch our breath as we realize: Father and Spirit never left our valley, as Jesus in the poignancy of his humanness had to do. "The Kingdom of God is within you."

We are taught about this coming-straight-toward-us of Jesus, by the icon that is each going-away that we endure.



But we are telling ourselves stories, and looking at picture books, about comings and goings - aren't we? - to help us with the ultimate mystery of Divine Presence.

In actuality, the Second Coming will be when we and all our dear ones - along with all our hostile or unknown ones - know that the Son is always fully turned toward the Father *and* fully turned toward us. When we know that *fully*, then the Kingdom will have come "in majesty and power," and in sweetness and in oh! what light! - the light of knowing

that

God **encompasses** us.

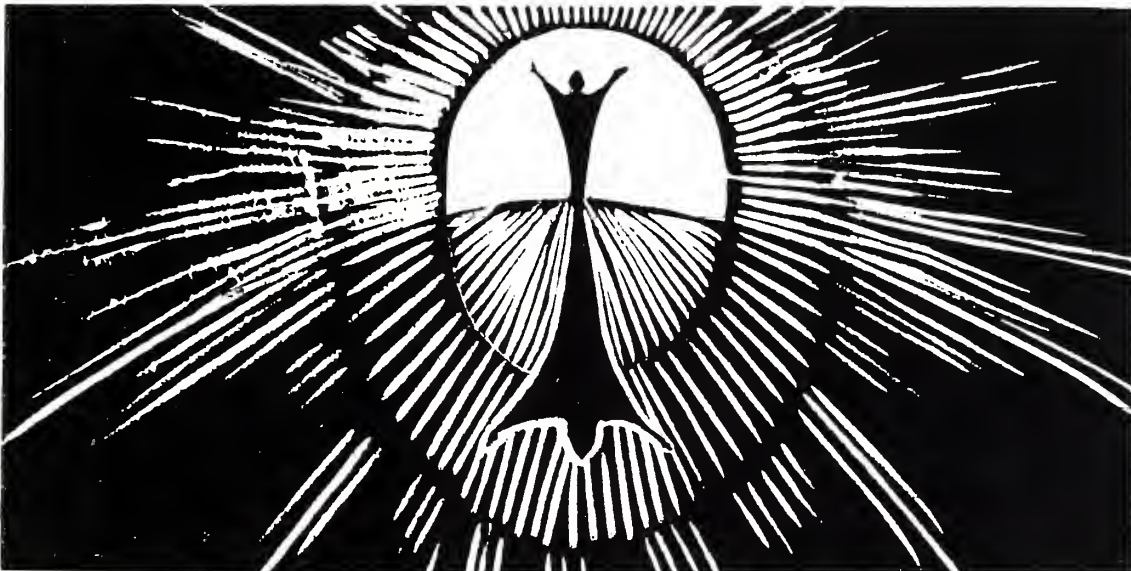
And always has.

And always will.

Blessed Advent!

November 28, 1998+

▷◁



TIME and the TIMELESS DOCTOR

Sr. Mary Regina
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For if eternity and time are rightly distinguished by this, that time does not exist without some movement and transition, while in eternity there is no change, who does not see that there could have been no time had not some creature been made, which by some motion could give birth to change - the various parts of which motion and change, as they cannot be simultaneous, succeed one another - and thus, in these shorter or, longer intervals of duration, time would begin.

St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 11, 6

When did time begin and how was it measured since there were no clocks to tick? St. Thomas answers that God simultaneously created time together with three other entities, in this way:

- the *spiritual* or *empyrean heaven*, [i.e. the abode of the blessed, angels and saints],
- *corporeal matter*, by which is meant the earth,
- *time*,
- and the *angelic nature*.¹

According to St. Thomas the passage from Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," dispels three false notions:

The first, held by the Platonic school, stated that "the world always was, and time had no beginning" [or end]. But Genesis records, "'In the *beginning*...' - viz., *of time*."

The second error held that there were two principles of creation, one of good things the other of evil things. Against this, "'In the beginning' is expounded - *in the Son*." To this, St. Thomas adds that God the Father is the efficient principle of creation by reason of power, and the Son is the exemplar principal by reason of wisdom. "Thou hast made all things in wisdom." (Ps. 103:24).

A third error consisted in the concept that God created corporeal things through the medium of spiritual creatures such as angels. But divine revelation holds that, "'In the *beginning*' - i.e., before all things - '*God created... heaven and earth*'." It is amazing that these three errors are still popular in modern thought.²

If "time is the measure of movement,"³ as it is, what movement does it measure? What is its essence? These questions have boggled the minds of great men in every century and walk of life. St. Augustine wrote:

What *is* time...? I do not know. But at any rate this much I dare affirm that I know: that if nothing passed there would be no past time; if nothing were approaching, there would be no future time; if nothing were, there would be no present time. [And he adds:] Time takes no holiday.

St. Augustine, *Confessions* 4, 8, 11, 14

Shakespeare often made reference to time in his plays, "Time is out of joint," in *Hamlet*; or "O, call back yesterday, bid time return," in *Richard II*. Benjamin Franklin recommends, "Do not squander time for that is the stuff life is made of." From Omar Khayyam come these words of wisdom, "The bird of time has but a little way to flutter - and the bird is on the wing."

Time is one of the world's deepest mysteries. No one can say exactly what it is. Yet, the ability to measure time makes our way of life possible. Our reason can only judge what we see, hear and feel, in other words, what we can study through the information our senses give us. This can be deceptive due to our limited reasoning powers. St. Thomas holds that faith is needed to ponder natural mysteries correctly. For example, reason cannot prove that creation had a beginning or will have an end, though it tries to do so in the realm of science. It is a divinely revealed truth that God created the universe and is governing it to a final end. God gives time a purpose, a reason for being.

Time can be compared to a pyramid with Jesus Christ at the pinnacle. All of time, past, present and future flows down from Christ and returns to him. He is the purpose of creation and he is the Word made flesh. He is the fullness of Time. *Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever. Amen.*

Try to imagine yourself in a world without time. Such a timeless world would be at a standstill. Would there be some alternative? Yes. St. Thomas calls this alternative eternity. Eternity has no beginning or end, it is interminable, and it has no succession, being simultaneously whole. "God *is* His own Eternity."⁴

St. Thomas defines time as "the numbering of movement by *before* and *after*."⁵ That definition sounds too simple, doesn't it?

St. Thomas explains time as numbered in this way: the number of "time is *one* only.... The true reason why time is one, is to be found in the oneness of the first movement by which, since it is the most simple, all other movements are measured."⁶ A good example of this, among many, is the fact that we number a day by 24 **one** hour periods or 24 hours.]

St. Thomas gives importance to what kinds of things can be measured by time. The being of things corruptible, because it is changeable, is not measured by eternity but by time. There is also a kind of time that measures the movement of incorruptible beings, such as angels and the souls of people. It is simple, but complicated!

St. Thomas holds that there are two kinds of time: continuous and non-continuous. An example of continuous time is that of a nun saying the Divine Office or a person walking down the road, and so on. *Change* in corruptible (corporal) beings is the basis of continuous time.

But angels and human souls are above the change implied in corruptible beings. Are they subject to only one kind of time? St. Thomas states that both angels and human souls are subject to both continuous time and non-continuous time because they are both creatures and not eternal as is God. He explains it this way:

In every change there is a before and after. Now the before and after of movement is reckoned by time, ... since there is a before and after in it.... An angel is above that time which is the measure of the movement of the heavens

[i.e. the solar system], because he is above every movement of a corporeal nature. Nevertheless, the angel is not above the time which is the measure of the succession of his existence after his non-existence, and which is also the measure of the succession which is in his operations [acts]. Hence, Augustine says that *God moves the spiritual creature according to time*.⁷

“The [human] intellect is above that time which is the measure of the movement of corporeal things.” But it cannot know everything at *one* time. Only God can see all things at the same time. The human mind sees many things in relation to a whole imperfectly or a specific part of a whole. (Example: when we look at a forest we see trees but if we focus on one tree in that forest we do not see *trees* but one tree. God sees the forest and each individual tree in it at the same time.)⁸

St. Thomas points out an interesting difference between eternity, æviternity, and time.

The being that is measured by eternity [God] is not changeable, nor is it annexed to change. ...Time has *before* and *after* [=change]; æviternity in itself has no *before* and *after*, which can, however be annexed to it; while eternity has neither *before* nor *after*, nor is it compatible with such at all.⁹

St. Thomas has some very interesting remarks about æviternity. He makes these important distinctions: “Æviternity differs from time, and from eternity, as the mean between them both....” “Eternity [God] is simultaneously whole [and unchangeable]....” Æviternity is created but not subject to time. It has “a beginning but no end.” It is the abode of angels and souls of the blessed “...who have unchangeable being as regards their nature with changeableness as regards choice; moreover, they have changeableness of intelligence, of affections and of places in their own degree.” Time is created and is “the measure of movement,” the measure “of the being of things corruptible.” It has before and after. This kind of time will end with the end of the world.¹⁰

The word æviternity was not coined by St. Thomas and its origin is uncertain. In the Latin dictionaries, *ætas* is a contraction from *ævitas* which means age. *Aevites* is an old form of *ætas*. *Æternitas* means eternity. *Æternus* is an adjective meaning eternal, immortal, everlasting. The contraction *æviternity* would mean an eternity that is created, having a beginning but no end.

Have you ever thought about how important the quantum of time we call an *instant* has been in your life? Your soul was created and united to your body in an instant. At Baptism, you were sanctified in an instant. Any act of your will for good or evil is done in an instant. At death, your soul will leave your body in an instant. Judgment will take place in an instant. At the resurrection your soul will be reunited to your body in an instant. What, then, is an instant?

An instant is an infinitesimal unit of time. St. Thomas states that the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus is effected in an instant. This is because it is effected by a Power which is Infinite, to which it belongs to operate in an instant.¹¹

[As for an instant in time as we know it, St. Thomas holds that] the measure of the first movement of the heavens [creation] is the measure of all movement....

[He cites that some, like St. Albert the Great and St. Bonaventure] do not grant simply that there is a mid-time between every two instants. For they say that this is true of two instants referring to the same movement, but not if they refer to different things. Hence between the instant that marks the close of rest, and another which marks the beginning of movement, there is no mid-time. But in this they are mistaken, because the unity of time and of instant, or even their plurality, is not taken according to movements of any sort, but according to the first movement of the heavens, which is the measure of all movement and rest.¹² [Since rest precedes movement or ends movement, the essence of an instant is rest.¹³]

This may seem puzzling. How can an act that brings a movement of deliberation to an end be rest? On the seventh day God *rested* from all his works = **act** of creation. We pray, "Eternal *rest* grant to them, O Lord." We are asking that the faithful departed be given the beatific vision, which is an *act* of eternal adoration or perfect rest.

God Himself will be the goal of our desires; we shall contemplate Him without end, love Him without surfeit, praise Him without weariness. This gift, this state, this **act**, like eternal life itself, will assuredly be common to all.

St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 22,30.

In defining duration, St. Thomas states that, "Two things must be considered in time: time itself, which is succession; and the now of time which is imperfect."¹⁴ He quotes Boëthius as saying, "The *now* that flows away makes time; the *now* that stands still makes eternity."¹⁵ St. Thomas further illustrates:

The *now* of time is the same as regards its subject in the whole course of time, but it differs in aspect; for inasmuch as time corresponds to movement; its *now* corresponds to what is moveable; and the thing moveable has the same one subject in all time, but differs in aspect as being here and there; and such alteration is movement. Likewise the flow of the *now* as alternating in aspect, is time. But eternity remains the same according to both subject and aspect; and hence eternity is not the same as the *now* of time.¹⁶

St. Thomas asks, Whether a name can be given God?

Since...words are the signs of ideas, and ideas the similitude of things,... we can give a name to anything in so far as we can understand it. Now...in this life we cannot see the essence of God; but we know God from creatures as their principle, and also by way of excellence.... In this way therefore He can be named.... As some things are said of God in a concrete sense, to signify His subsistence and perfection, so likewise nouns are applied to God signifying substance with quality. Further, verbs and participles which *signify time*, are applied to Him because His eternity includes all time. For...*we can understand and express simple eternity only by way of temporal things*, because our intellect has a natural affinity to...temporal things.¹⁷

In Question 85, the time process of human thought is defined as taking time [as we all know!].

Composition and division of the intellect are made by differentiating and comparing [implying past, present and future time]. Hence the intellect knows many things by composition and division, as by knowing the difference and comparison of things.... Although the intellect abstracts from the phantasms [material images], it does not understand actually without turning to the phantasms.... And forasmuch as it turns to the phantasms, composition and division of the intellect involve time.¹⁸

Will time ever end? Yes and no. **Yes**, time that is measured by the movement of the corporal universe as we now see it with our eyes, will end. **No**, time in heaven will never end but it will be an altogether different kind of time. Like the angels, glorified saints will move about as they will. The important point is an act of the will. This is part of the mystery of the gift of agility.

As for time as we now experience it St. Thomas says this:

There are three opinions touching this question. The first is of the philosophers who assert that the movement of the heavens will last forever [Platonic school]. But this is not in keeping with our faith.... Others say that the movement of the heavens will cease naturally [Aristotelian school]. But this again is false.... Hence, we must agree with others who say that the movement of the heavens will cease at this renewal of the world, not indeed by any natural cause, but as a result of the will of God.¹⁹

The world will come to an end by no created cause, even as it derived its existence immediately from God.²⁰

Our new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the creator. The world began when God's word drew it out of nothingness; all existent beings, all of nature and all of human history are rooted in this primordial event, the very genesis by which the world was constituted and time began.²¹

The subject of æviternity must surface here at the end of time as regards purgatory and hell. St. Thomas ascribes æviternity only to the blessed, that is heaven. Purgatory is for the souls of people who need a further cleansing after death before they receive eternal beatitude. They are subject to a different kind of time but neither St. Thomas nor the church defines this *time* other than it is not eternal. St. Thomas defines the duration of hell as *eternal time*.²² Both St. Thomas and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* agree that there is a purgatory, that it is real, that it will end. With the Church St. Thomas holds that there is a hell that it is the abode of the damned, both angels and people, and that its duration is eternal. Beyond this, there are unanswered questions that it is wise to leave to theologians to debate in the light of Church doctrine.

Time in heaven? St. Thomas holds that after the resurrection and the renewal of the entire universe there will be a kind of time in heaven. For the whole person, body and soul, will be able to move through the universe at will without turning from the face to face vision of God; just as the angels who minister to us now always behold the face of the Father in heaven. This kind of time is a mystery to us now.²³

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has this to say:

The visible universe, then, is itself destined to be transformed, “so that the world itself, restored to its original state, facing no further obstacles, should be at the service of the just,” sharing their glorification in the risen Jesus Christ.²⁴

*We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed. The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men.*²⁵

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NOTES

- ¹ Thomas Aquinas, O.P., *Summa Theologia* (Benziger Brothers, Inc., New York, 1947), I, q. 46, a. 3, p. 244.
- ² ST. I, q. 46, *On the contrary*, p. 244.
- ³ ST. I, q. 10, a. 4, p. 42.
- ⁴ ST. I, q. 10, a. 2, p. 41. Emphasis mine.
- ⁵ ST. I, q. 10, a. 1, p. 40.
- ⁶ ST. I, q. 10, a. 6, p. 44. Emphasis mine.
- ⁷ ST. I, q. 53, a. 3, p. 272, I, q. 61, a. 2, p. 302. First emphasis mine.
- ⁸ Cf. ST. I, q. 85, a. 4, p. 437.
- ⁹ ST. I, q. 10, a. 5, p. 43.
- ¹⁰ ST. I, q. 10, a. 4, 5, 6, pp. 42-45.
- ¹¹ ST. II, q. 75, a. 7, p. 2451.
- ¹² ST. II, q. 75, a. 7, p. 2451.
- ¹³ Cf. ST. I, q. 53, a. 3, p. 272. “It is the nature of rest that the subject in repose be not otherwise.”
- ¹⁴ ST. I, q. 10, a. 1, p. 40.
- ¹⁵ ST. I, q. 10, a. 2, Obj. 1, p. 41. Cf. Boëthius, *De Trin. iv*. Emphasis mine.
- ¹⁶ ST. I, q. 10, a. 4, p. 43.
- ¹⁷ ST. I, q. 13, a. 1, p. 60.
- ¹⁸ ST. I, q. 85, a. 5, p. 437.
- ¹⁹ ST. III, q. 91, a. 2, p. 2951.
- ²⁰ ST. III, q. 88, a. 3, p. 2937.
- ²¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #338. Cf. St. Augustine, *De Genesi adv. Man.* 1,2,4: PL 34, 175.
- ²² ST. I, q. 10, a. 3, Reply obj. 2, p. 42: “The fire of hell is called eternal, only because it never ends.... In hell, true eternity does not exist, but rather time....”
- ²³ Cf. ST. III, q. 84, a. 1, 2, 3, pp. 2919-2924.
- ²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1047. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haeres.* 5,32,1: PG 7/2, 210.
- ²⁵ *Catechism*, #1048. *Gaudium et Spes* 39, § 1.

Do Not Be Afraid Facing the Millennium with Trust

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The simple expression, "Do not be afraid" has been used by men, angels and the Savior himself. The present Holy Father started his pontificate with the words, "Do not be afraid,"¹ and has uttered these words often during his reign. Having been urged repeatedly not to fear, especially as the millennium approaches, it would seem profitable for us to pause and consider why such an injunction should be recommended to us, and why we need to trust. There are many reasons for being afraid, and multiple factors that can contribute to that fear. I would like to concentrate on the aspect of fear that keeps us from being fully open to and accepting of the truth.

Truth can be delightful and uplifting for us, but it can also seem terrifying and frightful. When we sense pain in the revealing light of truth, we tend to fear it. This type of fear can be likened to a covering that we use to shield us from what we cannot bear to see. Yet, truth is not meant to harm us. It is meant to be the source of our joy and peace. As we do not realize how we resist the full exposure to truth, we do well to consider some of the methods we employ.

It all began in the Garden. When reading about Adam and Eve, we almost become envious at seeing how freely they spoke with God as they walked with him in the cool of the evening. For them, truth was obvious, approachable and acceptable. Then came the temptation and the fall. Genesis states that "the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked." (Gen.3:7) Even though this is usually interpreted to mean that Adam and Eve saw themselves in a new light, I would like to make another suggestion. I think it also means that they no longer could accept the full "naked" truth about themselves. By sewing fig leaves together, they attempted to cover up that unendurable nakedness. When God came to them in the evening, they hid because they were "afraid." How is it they are now afraid of him? They had walked with God and talked with him and had seen him face to face. Had God changed? Or had they? Truth was no longer totally acceptable to them, and they were afraid. Afraid of what? They were afraid of owning up to their transgression, of taking full responsibility for their own action. In response to God's question of "Why," they each in turn excused their disobedience and put the blame on someone or something else. The truth was now too much for them. "I was afraid because I was naked," Adam said. The truth was that he was afraid because he had transgressed and offended God, and he had not the courage to admit it. The "naked" truth about himself had become too frightening to be approachable, so he took fig leaves, sewed them together, and tried to hide behind them.

We do much the same, except that the fig leaves we use to cover over the truth do little more than deceive us. As we know, fig leaves do not have the ability to conceal

anything. If they had, God would not have replaced them with leather garments (see Gen.3:21). Our fear would not do us so much harm if it were not for this deception. It is interesting to note that when the angel Gabriel came to Mary (Lk. 1:30) and she was "afraid," Photius (Patriarch of Constantinople, 858) says that her fear was one of being deceived. The Angel's reply, according to him, was to assure Mary, as if he said, "I came not to deceive you, but deliver from deception."² Covered truth is nothing less than deception. Strangely enough, such attempts are often obvious to others. We only are deceived. To the degree that we are, we shall be unable to experience true freedom.

Jesus tells us, "the truth will set you free" (Jn.8:32). For us, freedom means peace, and peace means a true experience of God. To cover up truth by even a small amount of "fig leaves" is to deprive our souls of the peace that freedom would bring. This is why it is necessary to recognize our areas of fear, and to work at overcoming them. Instead of seeing truth as a frightful exposure, it should be looked upon as the "pearl of great price," the price of our peace.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus opens his instructions with the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." In the Hebrew, the word used for poor is *anawin*, and it means "those who are without possessions and whose confidence is in God." To overcome our fear, we need to be poor in spirit, to be naked before God. Our possessions can be likened to so many fig leaves that may keep us comfortable, but may also keep the truth hidden from our spiritual eyes. To be naked before God in our poverty of spirit is to be fully open to the truth about ourselves, with all that is beautiful in us and all that is not beautiful. It is accepting our gifts and our faults, without pretense or excuse.

In the Garden of Eden, God already knew the truth about Adam and Eve's disobedience. So, too, does he know the complete truth about us. We are the ones who need enlightening. In the Gospel Jesus speaks about fear and explains to us that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hidden, that shall not be known." (Mt.10:26). In like manner, Joseph "fears" to take Mary as his wife (Mt. 1:20). Pseudo-Chrysostom, in commenting on these words, remarks that God sent his angel to reassure Joseph in his fear because "God wanted to show Joseph that he knew the heart."³ If God knows our heart, then we are safe in remaining naked and open before him and his truth.

Our fear in accepting truth is connected with the pain that accompanies it. That may be because we think of our sufferings and trials as a casting down, a breaking of our spirits, a cause for sorrow. Yet, Jesus' attitude toward it would seem quite different, for when Jesus spoke of his own pain and suffering, he likened it to being "lifted up"(Jn.12:32), not of being cast down. If we could remember that pain can be a lifting up, a drawing up of all things to Jesus, then the pain involved in the acceptance of truth would not be so frightening. It would be precious and of great value.

Another thought about our pain is to remember we never suffer pain alone. When Jesus came walking across the water toward his apostles one night, his response to their outcry of fear was, "It is I, do not be afraid" (Mk.6:50). The NAB notes that this phrase translated literally really reads: "I AM!" as used in Ex.3:14; Is.41:4;10:14; 43:1-3.10,13. Here is the means for overcoming our fear. Our God is a God who is "with us" (Is.7:14). If he is with us, it is certain he watches over us. In commenting on Mark 6:50, Chrysostom says, "As soon then, as they knew Him by His voice, their fear left them."⁴ Once they knew he was with them, they no longer were afraid. Fear that is shared is not so overwhelming, and fear shared with God loses its power. That is why we trust. God, who knows us fully, is near us to help us.

Our trust will not be in vain. For as Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a treasure buried in a field (Mt.13:44), we can liken our search for truth as seeking that buried treasure. To possess truth we must sell "all" that we have. That means we cannot keep even a few of our treasured fig leaves. We must "sell," that is, give up our coverings completely. Then, when we have forgone any vestige of deception, God himself will clothe us. For when Adam and Eve left the garden, God did not simply deprive them of their precious covering. He supplied leather garments for them, something that would really protect them from harm. He is prepared to care for us in the same way.

As Isaiah told Ahaz: "Take care you remain tranquil and do not fear; let not your courage fail" (Is.7:4). We need to have courage in accepting truth. For John reminds us that, "whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God" (Jn.3:21), clearly seen, seen openly and in the light, seen because it is not being covered by "fig leaves." Our attempt to cover ourselves is not only a deception, but a dismal failure. Our struggle to avoid pain inevitably ends up increasing it. The truth is frightening at times, as is the vision of God. That is why we need so to trust in him.

In preparation for the Millennium, John Paul II wrote concerning the mistakes the Church has made in the past: "Acknowledging the weaknesses of the past is an act of honesty and courage which helps us to strengthen our faith, which alerts us to face today's temptation and challenges and prepares us to meet them."⁵ We, too, are tempted in our own garden. We, too, have an opportunity to meet and speak with God in our challenges and in the call he makes to us. This is a prime example of admitting the truth in viewing the Church's history. It is something we likewise should do to prepare for the Millennium ourselves.

Truth is like a light, revealing what is. We need not struggle to cover our sins, faults or true selves with our feeble and crumbly fig leaves. Not only will God pour down the light of truth upon us, he himself will clothe us. Seeing our pain in accepting the truth, "he will wipe every tear away" (Rev.21:4), and will make "all things new" (Rev. 21:5). He will give us a new garment, one "washed in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). This is the reason we need to overcome our fear, that we may seek the fullness of truth, despite the pain it gives. In discovering the truth about ourselves, we are freed

by that truth, and made new. The Millennium is the dawning of a new era. If we do not hide from the truth, we can walk with God in spirit in the “cool of the evening” (Gen. 3:8). For he is the Truth. Therefore, we need not be afraid. We need only trust in him.

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Notes

1. John Paul II, *Crossing The Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1994), p. 4.
2. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea*, Volume III, Part I, St. Luke (Preserving Christian Publications, Inc. 1993), p. 28.
3. *Ibid.*, Volume I, Part I, St. Matthew, p. 48.
4. *Ibid.*, Volume II, St. Mark, p. 127.
5. John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Nov. 14, 1994, #33.



AN EXPLORATION OF FR. GEORGE TAVARD'S *TRINA DEITAS*

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Suppose that we have just entered a theater (if we can go back in memory to that kind of experience), and we are settling down to study the playbill an usher has handed us. Or we have just entered our common room and have been given the program for a creation by our monastery theater artists to celebrate some event or feast-day.

What do we see on the paper in our hands that will orient us to the presentation about to take place "on stage" before us? Where are we supposed to be, in time and space?, we ask.

In like fashion, approaching the little 1996 book of Fr. George Tavard, entitled Trina Deitas,¹ we ask: to what time and space are we going? What would the playbill need to say? Perhaps something like this:

The place: Carolingian Francia; that is, the kingdom of the Franks in the time of the Carolingian line of kings. We should think of "middle" Europe - what we know as Germany/France.

The time of the action: The ninth century of the Christian era, with a sharp focus on the year 849 a.d.

In this territory and time what do we recognize, from our history schoolbooks? The name of Charlemagne, surely: Charles the Great/Carolus Magnus/ Charlemagne; King of the Franks, crowned Emperor of Rome by a Pope whose name we won't remember,² crowned on Christmas Day in the year 800 A.D.. His sons will have succeeded him in power by our key date of 849.

The actors in the drama:³

What names do we recognize among them?

Possibly, **Alcuin** - a monk imported from England to become the great light of Charlemagne's court school. Possibly, John the Scot - Johannes **Scotus**⁴ - the Irish monk who knew Greek, did Latin theology and made Pseudo-Dionysius accessible to all of us (18-19).

And what else in the milieu will be familiar? We will recognize, from our Dominican history, an activity called **monastic theology**, and know that with the founding of the court and cathedral schools, universities are on the way. What we probably won't expect of "monastic theology" in the period considered in this book, is its fierce argumentation; as Fr. Tavard points out (19), it was not at all in the serene style of the monastic theology of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

With the help of a few reminders, we may be expecting that in Church matters **the Franks and the Greeks** are a pair in tension and that in the period of our "play" we are close to the roots of Roman Catholic/Orthodox divisions.

Nicaea II, and its preoccupation with icons, may be familiar territory for us. What else do we already know about the context of our players? The **Book of Kells**, certainly (140). Another dimension is sketched in by noticing that it was in a **Viking** raid that one of our protagonists died.⁵

But probably we are do **not** recognize as familiar, in the program before us, the names of the chief actors: **Hincmar** and **Gottschalk**. (There is just a chance that If we have worked a little in the history of doctrine, we may have met Gottschalk in Denzinger, in connection with "predestination."⁶) In any case, let us meet them both now:

Gottschalk, Benedictine monk of Orbais, become prisoner in another abbey; theologian; poet.

Hincmar, Benedictine monk of Fulda, become Archbishop of Reims; canonist; pastor.

"Heretic!" is what each one will call the other - in the midst of streams of vituperation worthy of the attention of any historian of incivility.⁷

Synopsis of the plot:

I. Just at the beginning of our story, which has at its center an argument about ways to speak of the Trinity, a bitter dispute about predestination has arisen between two Benedictine monks, Hincmar and Gottschalk, in the course of which Hincmar, now Archbishop of Reims, has secured not only the synodal condemnation of Gottschalk but also his public flogging and then his imprisonment in a monastery within the Archbishop's jurisdiction. In the predestination dispute, Gottschalk has held firmly to the teaching of Augustine's later writings on "twofold predestination"⁸ - the predestination of some persons to eternal glory and of some to eternal damnation.

II. Now, in the time of the play: Gottschalk in his monastery of imprisonment hears that Archbishop Hincmar has banned the singing of a certain hymn. It was a hymn to the holy martyrs which both men had undoubtedly sung many times in their monastery liturgies. But now Hincmar as a pastor questions the propriety of one phrase in it: "trina deitas." Gottschalk defends that phrase and cites some traditional use of it.⁹ The debate rages as furiously as a manuscript-technology allows (26, n.6).

III. Something like "audience participation" follows. Artists and poets are invited to notice, as well as historians and ecumenical theologians, while, in a final scene, the playwright addresses some "lessons" to the audience. A surprising connection is made between this minor dispute and the whole field of icons, poetry, language.

The playwright:

Theologian, poet, multi-volume author, **George H. Tavard**, A.A., priest from Lyon, France (and so a near-neighbor to the scene of the dispute). His little book *The Catholic Approach to Protestantism*¹⁰ was the introduction to Christian ecumenism for many of us. A member of the Augustinians of the Assumption, he has offered us a delightful and profound book entitled *Les jardins* (note the plural: "the gardens") *de Saint Augustin*.¹¹ For many decades a leading ecumenist in North America and internationally, he served on ARCIC I, taught for years at a Methodist Seminary in Ohio, and continues now with the official Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue. Using his mother's name, he has published poetry in French, and in English the breathtaking *Song for Avalokita*.¹²

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Trina Deitas: The controversy between Hincmar and Gottschalk. By George H. Tavard. Marquette Studies in Theology No. 12. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1996. Pp.158, including Notes and Index.

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Trina Deitas, one of Fr. Tavard's five books on the Trinity, is historical theology, as he says (6), and was partially prepared for within the Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue, by his study of Hincmar's teaching on episcopacy.¹³

My basic approach to the exploration of ***Trina Deitas*** is that a book by Fr. Tavard is sure to be valuable, and that this one will be pertinent to the pre-millennium Trinitarian themes. I also assume that most of us do not have it at hand, and so I may be of service in communicating briefly what is in it as well as by pointing toward other books by the same author which are more important for us.

There will in fact turn out to be relevance to us as Dominicans and contemplatives as well as persons of Trinitarian faith. A surprising minor relevance can be shown right away: It is Gottschalk we are joining, rather than the Archbishop, every time we open our Benediction books to sing sweetly the "Panis angelicus," because we conclude it with: "Te trina deitas unaque poscimus" (54, n.54; 131).

What do we learn, then, from *Trina Deitas*?

First, let us review the controversy which Fr. Tavard presents. And to alert ourselves to its possible relevance for us, let us again "suppose":

Suppose we are at a choir rehearsal, with pencils ready to correct a misprint in one of our hymnbooks. Or - a less trivial instance, because bearing now upon meaning and doctrine - we may be about to correct a translation: for example, the unfortunate English-language petition "Re-create in us Your own Spirit, Lord" for Fr. Lucien Deiss's "Donne-nous, Seigneur...un esprit nouveau." With this latter example we have what we need to understand Archbishop Hincmar, who began to be concerned about the teaching conveyed by the phrase "trina deitas" in a hymn familiar to him and to others - a teaching that introduces multiplicity, he thought, within the very Godhead by the use of an adjective, "trina," which seems to count to three in regard to deity. (Not "tri-une" but "trine" is the proper English rendering of "trina," Fr. Tavard explains. "Trine" is an English-language word which has fallen out of use, but not yet out of all dictionaries [152]). Hincmar begins to see the phrase "trine deity" as a hitherto unnoticed carryover from the Arianism of the fourth century.

The monk Gottschalk, already Hincmar's defeated adversary in regard to the doctrine of predestination, hears of Hincmar's prohibition against "trina deitas" and writes from his monastery of imprisonment against the prohibition, arguing that Hincmar's position - namely, that "trine" is not an appropriate modifier of "essence" or "deity" - is Sabellian, that is, it is derived from the fourth-century opinion that "three persons in God" means only different "modes" of God. Gottschalk expounded his own understanding of the Three Persons as modifying the Godhead each in its own way. Since all the divine attributes may be called trine and one, if "deity" cannot be so spoken of, then there are "four" realities in God, not three (68).

For Gottschalk, Tavard says, "everything divine, including deity and its attributes, is naturally one and personally three" (68).

Tavard sums up the situation:

When the archbishop heard the word "trinus," whether in ordinary language or in hymnody, he spontaneously counted "one, two, three." Counting, however, does not lead to Trinity but only to the idolatric pretense of three gods. Hincmar therefore affirmed "una deitas" only. When Gottschalk heard the same word in the liturgical context of a traditional hymn, he did not count, but the eyes of his soul caught a glimpse of the deity that was revealed through Christ as three Persons, "trina deitas." And because, in spite of what Hincmar was saying of him, he believed in one God, he specified, "una et trina deitas" (143).

"tritheoteia, id est, trina deitas"¹⁴

But can "deity" be substituted for "God"? Is God deity? Should we use "deity" as an attribute? In the intellectual tradition to which both disputants belonged, there had been some use of "trine" as Hincmar understood it (i.e., as "triple"), and some understanding of "trine" as Gottschalk understood it, i.e., as a collective numberless plural. Hincmar's contention, as Tavard presents it, was that the weight of tradition was on the side of not using "trine" as Gottschalk did, because number cannot qualify the divine essence, and because "deity" is a substantial name, not a personal one. So Gottschalk is reproached as a lover of novelty. Tavard supplies us with additional references that Gottschalk could have made in his own support, and an indication of the subsequent untroubled uses which have been made of the phrase - Aquinas's among them (131).¹⁵

Fr. Tavard himself has "no fundamental difficulty in calling the deity [with Gottschalk] tri-personal or simply trine," to "highlight the full divinity of each Person" (122). "If the divine Being is not divided among the Three Persons... then there is reciprocity between Person and Being, Substance, or Nature" (122). He says also: "it does not seem to me that Hincmar has been able to prove his case" (111), namely, that Gottschalk's approach is unorthodox.

Is "trine" divisive of the Godhead (114)? Or is it a striking affirmation of the unity of the Three? True, grammatically some adjectives imply plurality even when they remain singular. But Gottschalk wanted to emphasize, Fr. Tavard tells us, by the phrase "personally trine," that while each Person performs one same action and each is the same attributes, that is so "according to the unique character of each as Person" (78). Hincmar, Fr. Tavard says, thought the phrase in question (and the consequent controversy) to be a major problem.

Yet Tavard is clear: For both combatants the "center" is this: the deity as such is entire in each Person (121). Hence the tragedy of their dispute (154).

Now let us follow Fr. Tavard's lead and move toward a broader canvas. What is the relation between grammar and theology? And what diverging approaches to theological language, Tavard asks, do we see here between the poet and the canonist (cf. 138)? The practice and perspective of Gottschalk is, he thinks, that the good poet is free to assign a special sense to words he uses (94). The canonist Hincmar, as Tavard characterizes him, expects the "obvious" sense of words, on the conviction that language is social, not private; it

should be read in its conventional significance, not according to Gottschalk's intuitions (94). Fr. Tavad points out that both men held, as assumptions of their culture, a strict correspondence between knowing and being, between grammar and knowledge, and the fundamental identity of all grammars.

"lessons" and relevance

In a final chapter of this book (chapter 7), Fr. Tavad offers us some lessons from his study. If the present exploration is not to be limited to an abbreviation and rearrangement - more or less correct, more or less helpful - of Tavad's own material, a selection needs to be made of points especially relevant to ourselves. Then we can rejoin Tavad with the two topics he has chosen to emphasize from among the lessons: a renewed incentive for re-thinking the present use of the "Filioque" (the phrase "and from the Son" in the Nicene Creed); and the ties of the "trina deitas" controversy with the struggle about holy images which had been going on for several generations before it (132).

One of the interesting lessons of this little book comes from the fact that, as Fr. Tavad points out, the controversy between Hincmar and Gottschalk occurs within the same intellectual world and is to an extent a matter of "old ways" versus "new ways." As Tavad reads Hincmar (120): "New ways are proper only when new circumstances call for new decisions." One should "do" according to the metropolitans and synods; the "what is never done" is an important category (cf. 123). But as Tavad shows, by following in this way, whatever is the point at issue is never met (121-122).

Fr. Tavad presents Gottschalk's vision as focused on "the contemplative dimension of faith, a contemplation that is served by both poetic and theological expression" (138). The exchange between Hincmar and Gottschalk flared, unhelpfully, into their mutual charges of "heretic!" (131), but as Tavad puts it also: they can be considered "reconciled, in spite of themselves, in the church's memory" (154).

["Trine and one deity"] was not, one must admit on behalf of Hincmar, in the standard theological or liturgical usage of Western Christendom. But whether it was heretical or even wrong is of course a different question (50).

This gives us a useful and double-edged suggestion, it would seem, for evaluating our own dialogues. Both disputants saw at stake the Christian doctrine of God (130).

The little book we are considering has helpful reminders of some theological history which we may have forgotten. For example:

A prominent aspect of the East-West trinitarian controversy was vocabulary: for the Greeks, "hypostasis" was what we call "person," and the literal Latin translation of hypostasis is "substantia"; but substantia was usually understood as referring to the divine nature. Hence the enormous trouble with affirmations of either "three hypostases" or "one substance" (75, 78). In regard to "proceeding," Fr. Tavad gives us in a note this summary:

Briefly, the Eastern and Western traditions are not contradictory, if it is admitted that the Latin *processio* has another meaning than the Greek *ekporeusis*. Thus

one may say, "the Spirit originates from the Father alone and proceeds from the Father and the Son" (151, n. 18).

Interesting for the history of Catholic/Orthodox discussions is Scotus's contribution that *ek* and *ex* connote total origin from the Father, while *dia* or *per* indicate origin also, but without the note of totality (74). We are given the date and occasion of the interpolation of "Filioque" ("and from the Son") into the Nicene Creed: February 2, 1014, at the coronation of Henry II in Rome. And we learn again (146) that the fragile achievement of the Council of Florence in 1442 was the affirmation that there is no contradiction between *a Patre per Filium* (the Spirit is from the Father through the Son) and *ab utroque* (the Spirit is from both Father and Son) (146).

We are reminded also of the history of "person": a signifier of interrelationship, as in Augustine, or, with Boethius, of incommunicability (82). (Here, we learn, Gottschalk departed from Augustine [70], whom he had followed so closely into disaster in the predestination argument: in the Trinity, personal names are by no means relative, he thought [69].)

An unexpected thread in the weave of "women's issues" is Hincmar's identification of Eve with Adam in his (Latin) phrase: *et Eva ipsa est Adam*. (The context is the universality of original sin [100,n.40]).

It will be a discovery for most of us, and especially for those familiar with catacomb art, that there was a "Rule n. 82" from a seventh-century council¹⁶ instructing church artists to depict the humanity of Christ rather than the symbol of the Lamb (139). Fr. Tavard's point in recalling this is to link developments in painting with developments in christological dogmas (cf. 139).

An interesting theme from doctrinal history is signaled: the early referent of "corpus mysticum," for Gottschalk and others, was the Eucharistic sacrament (21). De Lubac's study, fifty years ago, of the variety in early uses of the phrase "the body of Christ" is itself a part of modern doctrinal history. (Tavard's reference to it is tucked into an endnote [27 n.111].)

If in our early studies we had difficulties with the famous "Rule" of St. Vincent of Lérins - "one should teach only what has been believed 'everywhere, always, and by all'" - a context for the Rule is supplied for us: Vincent (d.450) saw a doctrinal position of Augustine's¹⁷ as a late accretion (!) to the ancient universal consensus (23). Fr. Tavard goes on to advise: "Although Catholic authors have often argued from this rule [of Vincent of Lérins] it can never be applied strictly to any formulation of doctrine" (28, n.24).

By considering the controversy set out in this book, we are made more free in relation to what Fr. Tavard calls St. Augustine's "mixed heritage to Latin Christendom" (19), and his "unfinished theology of grace" (24). He recalls that long ago doctrine went beyond Augustine in regard to predestination and to the question of salvation outside the visible limits of the Church.

Though we learn that some theological discussions are "rendered obsolete" by "the evolution of languages" (149), we also learn to our surprise that the French edition of the present *Catechism of the Catholic Church* uses "trine" to modify "l'unité divine" (151, n. 21), where the English translation uses "tri-une."

(A lesson for the University Press would be a note on the number of "typos" in so small a book.)

"Trinity" (i.e., the formulations) as expressions of experience

We return now to Fr. Tavard's own choice for emphasis among the lessons that can be derived from the Hincmar/Gottschalk Trinitarian controversy.

In view of the hope for reunion in 2000 still being expressed by John Paul II for Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians, Fr. Tavard draws attention to the progress there has been in East-West Christian understanding in regard to icons. He does so partly in order to ask for similar progress in regard to the "Filioque" (146, 148) - a matter which Yves Congar, O.P., also asked to be re-studied, as we may remember.¹⁸ In the century of the "trina deitas" dispute, and subsequently, the "Filioque" has functioned, Tavard thinks, as a unifier - political and cultural (if this is not pressing his own careful statements) - but its religious and theological function can be re-studied.

The best surprise in the Hincmar/Gottschalk book is the link Fr. Tavard makes between the roots of their controversy and the broad questions of religious art and expression. We have already noticed his attention to canonist/poet categories for understanding the two men and their mutual incomprehension. And we have followed him to consideration of the strict correspondence expected by the "Carolingian mind" between thought and reality: "the way things are said is the way they are," hence "grammar is the gate of metaphysics"; it "opens a metaphysical perspective" (66).

Then Fr. Tavard goes on to the whole matter of signification and representation. He puts the connection of poetry and painting cautiously: "the poetic use of language and the iconic use of paint are 'not dissimilar'" (142).¹⁹ And here we find ourselves again in the Greeks/Franks tension, set out for us by Tavard (I summarize): the Franks denied that pictures can be holy, and assigned a limit to Christian art: images speak to intellect, and teach. The Greeks at Nicea affirmed that pictures can be holy. The Eastern expectation is that images facilitate entrance into the mysteries, into the spiritual world of the believer, that they are ways of perceiving Presence, through the power of Christ (139), that they are an opening to the believer's world of faith.

Tavard names the issue in another way also:

For both East and West, theology can be non-verbal (communication). But what kind of theology is this non-verbal communication (140)? For the Greeks, theology is contemplative and icons are sacramental. For the Franks, theology is didactic and images are catechetical (140) or decorative.

To put the broader question: what level of reality do symbols reach (141)? For example, the phrase "trina deitas"?

Words can be verbal icons, giving access to the reality of "deitas." The "trinus" of a hymn does not simply state the the Trinity of Persons is a Trinity of the deity. It also places the singer in a worshipping attitude before the mystery of the three Persons who are one (142).

The question, says Tavad, is really about the entire range of language (143) and "about the broader semiotic field" (141).

Here the John-Scotus "detour" (70-76) which Tavad makes in the book (i.e., the pages devoted to Scotus's participation-theology) yields a pertinent insight:

[Both cataphatic and apophatic theology] must eventually be transcended in a language that is neither affirmative nor negative, but symbolic (72).

***pax! lux!:* the patterning of symbol and reality²⁰**

Fr. Tavad's powerful grasp of the trinitarian patterning of reality - which surely is the contemplative core of his books - is expressed also in this one.²¹

Tavad points out that Gottschalk's view of the divine attributes as cumulative (we are told he always gives lists of them) "opens an extremely dynamic contemplation of the divine actions in creation" (146), and also that his thinking shines yet another ray on the so-called "appropriation" (113) - a matter of intense theological interest to anyone for whom the Trinitarian doctrine is, as Tavad calls it, the expression of an experience (148).

Fr. Tavad has an important passage (pp 215-216) on the topic of appropriation in his *Poetry and contemplation in St. John of the Cross*.²² The passage concludes with:

At the climax of experience, and presumably also in the beatific vision beyond dying love, each Person is perceived both in its identity with divine Being (each is all that God is) and in its constitutive relation to the other Persons. The coincidence of these two relationships justifies using a term of nature, an attribute, to designate a Person.... Yet this is not, as an appropriation would be, merely a view of the mind and a phenomenon of speech. It is a symbol in the true sense of the term.... The fruit received from God in his self-gift breaks appropriation down, just as it tears the veil, all the veils, of merely human life and thought (*P. and C.*, 216).

In a similar vein he had already said:

At the summit of mystical experience the intimate knowing of the Word and the Spirit, and therefore of the Father....brings about a more profound understanding of the divine Being in its oneness and in its attributes (*P. and C.*, 208).

The author's presentation of this Trinitarian controversy encourages us to associate singular and plural in our prayer. With Gottschalk we can sometimes say: "Vobis Deo gratias" - for which Fr. Tavad suggests the translation "Thanks to you all, God" (122) - in order not to neglect in speech the lived relationships, and to affirm the singularity of deity at the same time as we refer to the Persons (123). Here we are reminded of Blessed Elizabeth's prayer: "O my Three! My All!"²³

When I wonder which is the chief "afterimage" for me of this exploration of the book *Trina Deitas*, I find: an increased aliveness to Father, Son, and Spirit even as we sing (for

example) to the One who "is justice and truth."²⁴ And I hear in it yet another exhortation to more patient daily human dialogue: we disputants, too - of common life or of doctrine - may well be "reconciled in the church's memory," finally and in spite of ourselves.

But my purpose in sharing an exploration of Tavard's *Trina Deitas* book was "gemina," twofold: to give some idea of its contents for people who might not see it themselves, and also to invite them to turn by preference to other books by the same author - most urgently these three: *The Vision of the Trinity*, *Song for Avalokita*, and *Poetry and Contemplation in St. John of the Cross*.²⁵ Perhaps the level of the questions to which George Tavard can bring us is clear.

It may do honor to the efforts of both Hincmar and Gottschalk to preserve Trinitarian faith if I add a compelling image of the Father which Fr. Tavard presents in *Poetry and Contemplation*:

As usual in classical Trinitarian theology, ...the first Person does not reveal itself directly....Yet, in relation to the image of the hand, identified with the Father, he [John of the Cross] formulates a beautiful prayer: 'Oh hand, as generous as thou art powerful and rich, richly and powerfully dost thou give me thy gifts! Oh, soft hand, softer still for this soul, and softly laid upon it, for if thou wert to lean hardly upon it the whole world would perish.'

If John of the Cross thus places himself before the Father, this is because he has first sensed the Father's touching (*P. and C.* 208).

▷◁

NOTES

1. The citation is given below in the text. Page numbers in parentheses in this article refer to this one book.
2. Pope Leo III (795-816); Tavard, *Trina Deitas* (11).
3. Fr. Tavard does not use the image of play and players. He simply refers to the tragedy of the dispute in the two men's lives. The vocabulary of the theater is suggested to me by the cover Marquette University Press has given to *Trina Deitas*: a photo of the stark sanctuary and bare altar of a medieval abbey church in France - a scene surely awaiting players and a drama.
4. "[T]he most impressive philosopher and theologian of the ninth century was Johannes Scotus. ..." (Tavard, 18).
5. Hincmar died during the raid of 882 (Tavard, 154).
6. DS (11965) 621o.
7. Tavard calmly describes the exchanges as being "in the vituperative style of the period" (102), with their calls of "blasphemer," "a spurious excrescence at the root of bitterness" (102), "maniac" (124). Or: "fornicator, blind, shameless,... enemy of truth" (125).
8. For Augustine, predestination is to be understood along the lines of charity: both are twofold.
9. However, as Fr. Tavard points out (67), Gottschalk neglected to cite what might have been his strongest ally: the usage of Pope Pelagius (556-561) who in a letter of 557a.d. professed the unity of God as "trine" (Tavard, 50). But the correct reference for him to make from Constantinople III would have been to an imperial covering-letter for the *acta* (Tavard, 62).

10. George H. Tavard, A.A., *The Catholic Approach to Protestantism* (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1955), tr. From the French by the author.
11. *Les jardins de Saint Augustin* (Montreal, Québec: Les Editions Bellarmin, 1988).
12. Henri Wasser, *Song for Avalokita* (Philadelphia, PA: Dorrance, 1979).
13. "Episcopacy and Apostolic Succession in the Works of Hincmar of Reims," *Theological Studies*, vol. 34 (1973), n. 4: 594-623.
14. Tavard 84, n. 30.
15. "Sacris solemniiis," of the Office for Corpus Christi, attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas (54, n. 54).
16. The "Quinisext," confirmed by Nicaea II (Tavard, 139).
17. The reference is to his position on the consequences of original sin.
18. Yves Congar, O.P., *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York, N.Y.: Seabury, 1982), v. III, iv.
19. In his contribution to the Cerf *en bref* series, *La Trinité* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1992), Fr. Tavard extends these insights to music.
20. A small bit of ninth-century language-analysis serves me here as image for Fr. Tavard's core insight about the trinitarian structure of reality: some Latin-speakers, oblivious of other languages, liked to point to the Trinitarian pattern "proved" by such important words (of three letters) as *pax* and *lux* (Tavard, 113).
21. Tavad calls attention early in the book to Gottschalk's sense that "there is a pattern of diversity in unity at several key points of the Christian faith and life. It is this pattern that explains the unity of the body of Christ and the diversity of its three modes...." (Tavard, 22).
22. It is of interest to me personally to recall that the summer months before my inquiries about entering a contemplative community were spent largely on preparing a review (for *Horizons*, the journal of the College Theology Society) of Fr. Tavard's *The Vision of the Trinity* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981).
23. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1988). The passage makes some common cause with Gottschalk.
24. "O mes Trois, mon Tout..." Elizabeth de la Trinité, *J'ai trouvé Dieu* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1980), t. 1a: 201.
25. Wed. III, Daytime Prayer, Liturgy of the Hours.
26. For *Song*: see n. 12.

The *Poetry and Contemplation* book is not for some restricted group, as I learned from watching "The Twins" of my monastery seize upon it with the connaturality of trinitarianly-patterned people. One of these eighty-year-olds drank in the following difficult passage and made it a frequent part of the "devotions" she conducted, from memory, for the benefit of her stroke-paralyzed but attentive twin sister:

God is "the beginning and the root of all movement," and therefore too of this motion [i.e., the awakening] in the soul. It is not the Word who wakes up; it is the soul who, moved by the Word, rises to a new day. God is then known as the source of all being and all life, as acting in all that is and in all that lives. The soul discovers that divine wisdom 'is more active than all active things.' It experiences, along with the divine presence in all things, the presence of all things in God the Word (*P. And C.*, 214).

JESUS IS LORD!

A Jubilee Reflection

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At the present time the whole world is caught up in a tidal wave of enthusiasm as we prepare to celebrate the great Jubilee of the birth of Christ, in the year 2000. What is the secret of this global exultation? How can we explain or understand it, unless we discover its hidden source? So it is to the mystery of its hidden source that we shall turn our attention in this reflection. This hidden source is none other than Jesus himself.

St. John, in recording the most important event in human history, summed up its vast and profound implications in one brief statement when he said:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." (1:1-3)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (1:14)

The entrance of Jesus into the orbit of time and history was not something which took the world by surprise, and found humankind totally unprepared; but rather something for which God had been preparing since the Fall in paradise. Nor was it an isolated incident of history, but rather the culmination of a work of ages. It stands at the center of time, the climactic scene of the great drama of the ages. Only when viewed in the light and context of universal history can the coming of Jesus be seen in true perspective. It is the coordinating element in time, drawing all the divergent strains of human history into one great symphony.

Jesus stands at the center of time. His person and mission fill all time and are the key to its mystery. He fulfills all prophecy, he dominates all history, he involves all ages, nations and civilizations in his own mystery. He gathers the mystery of time about himself like the folds of a beautiful robe. Time is his vesture, and every event in time finds its true significance only when viewed in the light of his coming. Even a superficial knowledge of universal history makes this clear. Every event in human history during the ages which preceded him looked forward to his coming, and was in some way involved in God's preparation of the world for it. Every event which has since taken place looks back to find its true significance in relation to him. For his salvation was to be for all. Just as all shared in the guilt of Adam so all were to be partakers in the mystery of redemption (Cf. 1 Co 15:21-22). When viewed in the light of its relationship to him, every event in time becomes a part of one harmonious whole, and history is no longer seen as a succession of isolated events bearing no relationship to one another.

Since Jesus came the world can never be the same. His claims upon the human race and upon each individual member of it are such as no other man would ever have

dared to make; and he proved these claims by works such as no other man has ever done or ever will do again. His doctrine is incomparably superior to any earthly philosophy, and he alone could say in perfect truth: "I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (Jn 10:10)

His gospel is suited to every age in time, to every culture and civilization and to every condition of life; because the truths it teaches are eternal and unchangeable, and therefore fill the deepest and changeless needs of human nature. This explains the universal appeal of Jesus and his doctrine to every age. The crystal beauty of truth shines on every page of his gospel and appeals to the very essence of human nature. Being made in the likeness of God, men and women love essentially what is good; and when a person beholds good, s/he reaches out to embrace it. This likewise explains why the gospel of Jesus, which in many things runs contrary to humanity's lower nature, has not yet conquered the world.

Jesus spoke clearly of his claims to universal acceptance, and he warned of the tragic consequences of denying him or of being ashamed of his gospel. He said:

He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. (Mt 12:30)

He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it. (Mt 10:37-39)

For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? (Mt 16:26)

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. (Mk 8:38)

No earthly philosophy or religious cult can give that fulness of meaning to life which the gospel of Jesus gives. No other way of life can give a person that sense of harmony and peace, or that fulness of happiness that his gospel provides. Since he has spoken, no one's life can ever be the same, for to use the expression of Hebrews, his word is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (4:12-13). To him, the supreme judge, every soul must ultimately render an account of its life.

St. John once said:

If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made

him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life. (1 Jn 5:9-12)

Jesus commissioned his followers, all of those who, then and now, are witnesses in faith to his resurrection, to go out and give testimony to him. In the nearly two millennia that have since passed, many have received his gospel with hearts open to believe. Others have chosen to turn a deaf ear. Many more have simply never heard it. The words of Jesus still ring true, "I tell you, lift up your eyes, [look into the approaching millennium] and see how the fields are already white for harvest" (Jn 4:35). Like their Master when he came into this world, his followers who give witness to him have the power to change the face of the earth. For Jesus whom they proclaim is truly the Lord, sent by the Father, the one who holds the key of life, who is the fulfilment of all time, past, present and still to come, the one alone who can bring humanity to its final goal of eternal life.

This then is the cosmic event which we Christians are about to celebrate in the great Jubilee of 2000. But how can we, as contemplatives, personally contribute to this global celebration? Perhaps the most perfect way would be to ponder and put into practice the farewell message of Jesus to his apostles on the night of the Last Supper. "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:9, 10, 12). "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn 13:35)

We conclude this brief reflection on the all embracing mystery of Christ with the following hymn¹ which describes an important aspect of the theme of the great Jubilee: the universal nature of Jesus' mission.

*Most glorious Lord, whose mystery fills Creation,
All things find true significance in thee;
Of this vast complex thou art the Foundation,
Its Principle, its Terminus and Key.*

*Time is Thy robe; its mystic seamless fabric
Was woven by the Father's own right hand,
When by His Word creation was established,
And awesome mystery of Time began.*

*All through the ages this thy robe is weaving,
And shall be till time's mystery shall close.
In its design each human life is woven
As ornamental thread of purest gold.*

*All ages most remote in past or future,
Beneath thy scepter and thy mystery come,
As life on earth and orbit of the planets
Must come beneath dominion of the sun.*

*Oh Savior blest! Thy Godhead's fascination,
Doth draw Man to thine inmost mystery,
To find in thee life's truest exaltation;
Thy Truth alone that can make mankind free.*

*Most glorious Lord, oh Jesus, Light of ages,
Come shed thy rays upon our darkened soul;
Be thou our Way, our Truth, our Light, our Compass,
To lead us safe to our eternal goal.*

✂

¹ This is my original poem from which Hymn No. 459 in *The Summit Choirbook* © 1983 by DNS, was adapted.

LECTIO WITH A FRESCO

Sr. Marie Dominic, O.P.
Farmington Hills, MI

In a monastery class on Dominican History and Sources we were studying Dominicans of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. We were introduced to Fra Angelico's frescoes at San Marco.

"In relation to the rooms in which they find themselves, most of the scenes are relatively large in scale. In each case the scene is represented on the window wall opposite the door, and the wall thus contains two apertures, one opening on the physical and the other on the spiritual world. Dominating their austere surroundings, they were designed as aids to meditation, not as decoration, and were intended to secure for the mysteries they described a place in the forefront of the friars' mind by keeping them constantly before their eyes."¹

As part of our study of Fra Angelico we were asked to choose a print of one of his San Marco frescoes and to pray with it for a few weeks. We were further encouraged to live with the mystery presented in the fresco letting it speak to our senses, mind, spirit and heart. We were asked to keep a day by day journal of what we experienced as we spent time with the painting.² Art, it was explained to us, is meant to be creative not only for the artist but for the beholder. The viewer is invited to come before a piece with no preconceived notions, in total openness, and to let it speak to her.

FRA ANGELICO'S FRESCO, THE RESURRECTION.

Day One (December 20)

I felt drawn to this picture immediately because of a past experience with the Resurrection gospel stories. I shall see if what attracted me before still draws me into this picture, yet I will remain open to what new insights lie hidden and concealed within the painting/story, waiting to be discovered.

I place the painting at a distance and I am struck by the muted colors. Mary Magdalen's dress and cloak/mantle have the deepest and richest color.

I feel drawn to her; this is where I shall begin. I will attempt to stay with her and study her and invite her to draw me into herself that I may look out through her eyes.

**Dear Magdalen,
May I be with you this day,
this significant day,
As you discover your Teacher,
Lord and
Friend, anew.**



Noli Me Tangere, 1440-1
Fra Angelico

Day Two (December 21)

I place the picture on such an angle that I seem to come at the scene from behind Mary Magdalen. I try to place myself in the same posture as she is in.

Mary, why are your hands held that way? One is reaching up toward Jesus and the other is pointing in a downward position. Why are your hands not both raised in an upward position? Why are you not reaching out to embrace Jesus?

**Dear Magdalen,
Help me to understand your posture,
Help me to discover its significance
not only for you,
but for me as well.**

Day Three (December 22)

Magdalen, as I join you today for prayer my mind moves again to your hands. Are your hands not raised because it was at this moment that Jesus tells you “not to cling” to him? How did you feel when he spoke those words to you? Did you feel rejected or reprimanded?

I would have felt so confused. Here was the person I loved come back to life and I could not touch him or hold on to him. I would have felt bewildered.

**Magdalen,
Help me to reach beyond my feelings and comprehend the deeper meaning of
Jesus’ words, “Do not cling to me.”**

Day Four (December 23)

Magdalen, today I am struck and drawn into your gaze. Even though you have been told not to cling to Jesus and it appears that you begin to lower your hands, you never lower your eyes, nor move your gaze from the one you love.

What was it that Jesus was communicating to you, that mesmerized you so?

**Magdalen,
Teach me to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus,
no matter how I feel or
how things may appear.**

**Teach me that what truly matters
is my relationship with Jesus,
even when it feels different,
or might be changing
from what I knew in the past.**

Day Five (December 24)

Today as I look out through Mary Magdalen's eyes I feel and see the return gaze of our Lord. Their eyes are fixed on one another.

Today is Christmas Eve and once more we/I wait for the Christ, the promised one, to be born anew in our/my life.

How strange it is to be praying with a Resurrection painting. I have always reflected on a Nativity scene today, not a Resurrection one. But are not the eyes gazing back at me the same, whether from the Nativity scene or from the Resurrection painting?

**Magdalen,
Thank you for showing me that
the eyes are the same eyes
and that they are still filled
with the same tenderness and Love.**

Day Six (December 25)

Once again I am struck with the reality of it being Christmas and of my reflecting on Easter.

Christmas marks the time of Jesus' becoming human,
and
Easter marks the time when we were born into God's eternal life of divinity.
Easter is the time when death/evil was over-come, defeated and destroyed.

So Resurrection is about birth:
Jesus comes forth from the darkness of the tomb,
he is born anew into eternal life.

(I notice for the first time that the darkest color in the painting is the doorway of the tomb.)

**Magdalen,
Help me to always turn toward the light of Life.
Help me to become more humane, which is truly more divine.**

Day Seven (December 26)

As I gaze and begin my prayer today I realize that Mary Magdalen is kneeling between death and life. She has turned her back on darkness/death and is facing toward and looking into the eyes of life and light.

I realize this is what Mary Magdalen has been inviting me to see and recognize. In order to choose life anew I must turn my back on what has gone on in the past and look toward the light of Jesus, not clinging to what I knew but open to what can be, now and in the future.

**Mary Magdalen,
Show me how to keep focused on my choice. When I am tempted to turn around,
re-direct my gaze back toward the light of Jesus' eyes.**

Day Eight (December 27)

Today as I spend time gazing into the face of Jesus I have to admit that I am not too drawn to this painted image of Jesus. Fra Angelico's face of Jesus appears to me a bit distant and/or vacant. This image does not match the one I have come to know of Jesus.

As I stay with the image, even though his facial features do not appear warm to me, his eyes are kind and welcoming.

**Magdalen,
Allow me to continue to see and experience Jesus as you did while you were with him. I am sure you saw many of his expressions and came to know and understand his moods and passions.**

Continue to open my eyes to see and recognize the Lord more intimately.

Day Nine (December 28)

Today I come back to the notion of the choice between life and death. As I look at the picture I realize that although the colors are darker nearer the tomb they become lighter as they move closer to Jesus.

What can this mean?

Day Ten (December 29)

I notice something in the painting that I have not noticed before today. Jesus is holding onto or carrying a long piece of wood. His one hand is lower in the direction of Mary Magdalen and his other hand is balancing or holding onto this piece of wood.

What could his action mean? What is Fra Angelico trying to communicate with this action?

**Oh Artist,
What mystery are you hinting at? What message are you attempting to communicate?**

Day Eleven (December 30)

I gaze and examine closely what Jesus is holding on to. Where is it coming from? Is Jesus carrying the piece of wood? Is it attached to the fence running across the back of the picture? Does the wood continue on? Or does it stop in Jesus' hand?

Is this detail important?
What meaning does it have?

**Fra Angelico,
What are you trying to say?
What are you trying to reveal to me?**

Is the wood simply part of the fence? Or does it symbolize the means of our salvation, the wood of the cross, the tree of life?

Day Twelve (December 31)

As I look at the picture from a distance today, it seems as though I am looking through a window.

Today I feel a little distant, all of a sudden I have become an observer and not a participant. What must I see/observe from a distance or that I cannot see or recognize if I'm too close?

**Mary and Jesus,
Open my eyes wider that I may take in what I have not seen before.**

Day Thirteen (January 1, 1999)

Today begins a new year. This year is a new opportunity to encounter you, Lord, Jesus.

The Resurrection story calls me to a new relationship with you, one in which I am instructed "not to cling" to you.

**Dear Lord,
Help me to see with fresh new eyes.**

Day Fourteen (January 2)

The painting and the invitation to pray with it, is about looking and seeing, and not only on a surface. It is also teaching me that I can look at something or someone and still not be sure that I have the full and total picture.

This desire to know and see cannot always be satisfied. Am I willing to live with the unknown or mystery? Or do I have to give it meaning from my perspective before I can let it go or let it rest.

**Jesus,
Help me to live with mystery and wonder;
not that I stop asking questions or wondering about things,
but that I accept that there will be times
when I do not have the answers and
that it's OK.**

Day Fifteen (January 3)

Today as I gaze at Jesus I am drawn to the fact that the painting indicates that he is in motion; he is not standing still. Look at the garment over his shoulder, it appears as if it is moving.

I really did not notice his feet until I read a book on Fra Angelico's frescos which pointed out that his left foot is crossed over his right one.

If this is what is happening it might explain his gestures toward you, Mary Magdalen. He tells you not to cling to him. When persons are moving it is hard to hold onto or cling to them. In order to hold on to them, you have to be in a stationary position. Jesus, is that why you said to Mary not to cling to you? Were you in the process of ascending and did not want to be stopped and/or held back?

**Jesus,
Help me never to cling to who you were but who you are becoming in my life.**

Day Sixteen (January 4)

I keep moving back and forth between the invitation not to cling and the curiosity of trying to discover what it is that Jesus is holding onto. Not until I examined a larger picture of the Fresco was I able to see that it is a garden hoe. This is the image in one of the gospel stories: he is portrayed as a gardener.

**Jesus,
What am I still holding onto or attempting to cling to?
Help me to discover what keeps me from moving closer to you?
May I never lose sight of you, even when I cannot see or feel you as I once did.**

Day Seventeen (January 5)

Today the painting draws me to the scripture stories of the Resurrection.

...toward dawn on the first day of the week Mary Magdalen and the other Mary went to visit the sepulcher.... Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be

afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there' (Mt 28:1,10).

As I look at you, Mary, I do not see fear on your face. I see only astonishment/ amazement or - dare I say - ecstasy. You look as if you are very attentive to what Jesus is saying to you. As I look at you I get the sense that you are aware only of Jesus and of nothing else.

Mary,

You are a model for me; help me to be attentive always to God's word. Help me to be willing to meet Jesus in Galilee.

Jesus,

Help me not to be afraid of the new ways you come to me.

Day Eighteen (January 6)

Jesus said, 'Mary!' She knew him then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni,' which means Master. Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father' (Jn 20: 16-18).

Jesus,

Was it because Mary called you Master, and because of her gesture of falling down before you that you said, "Do not cling to me?" It was not you who changed toward her but she who changed before you. It was she who moved from being friend to being servant again by saying, "Master." Is that why you said, "Do not be afraid?"

Day Nineteen (January 7)

'...why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here, he has risen.' When the women returned from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the others. The women were Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James.... but this story of theirs seemed pure nonsense, and they did not believe them (Lk 24:6, 9-11).

Mary,

Help me always to speak the truth of what Jesus reveals to me and not to be afraid even when people may be unaccepting of the message.

Day Twenty (January 8)

Resurrection

**Fra Angelico I have prayed with your painting,
I have prayed with you,**

and I am still wondering.

**Can I live with mystery?
Can I live with not having all the answers?**

**Can I live with holding on?
Can I live with not clinging?**

**Can I live with what is hidden?
Can I live with what is revealed?**

**Can I live with what is not, Yet?
Can I live with what is?**

**Can I live with my feet planted on the earth?
Can I live with my eyes raised toward heaven?**

**Can I live with tenderness and strength?
Can I live with emptiness and vulnerability?**

**Can I live with darkness?
Can I live with light?**

**Can I live with the wood of the cross?
Can I live with the tree of life?**

**Can I live with all the questions?
Can I live not having all the answers?**

CAN I LIVE?

CHRISTMAS OR EASTER

**Is it Christmas?
Or
Is it Easter?**

**The season is Christmas,
My reflections are on Easter.**

**I'm confused!
Is it Christmas
or
Is it Easter?**

**If it's Christmas,
I'm tempted to hold on to the image
of the newborn child.
If it's Easter,
I'm tempted to hold on to the image
of the risen Christ.**

**Is it Christmas?
Or
Is it Easter?
I'm confused!**

The Christmas invitation is to
recognize the vulnerability of
the child who is king.
The Easter invitation is to
Recognize the vulnerability of
God who is human.

Will it be Christmas?
Or
Will it be Easter?
I'm confused!

Can both realities co-exist?
Can it be both -
Christmas and Easter?

Am I being challenged to hold on to
the tenderness of the Christ child
Who is hold and innocent?
While at the same time not clinging
to my life but
willing to lay it down?
Am I being challenged to be

raised up on the cross with Jesus,
who is sinless?
Am I willing to see things from Jesus
perspective?
Am I willing to be transformed?

If I am -
It is Christmas
And
It is Easter.
Why am I confused?

I'm confused!
Is it Christmas?
Or
Is it Easter?

What image will I follow and/or accept?
God who became one of us at
Christmas.
Or
Jesus the Man, who was raised up
on Easter.

✂

NOTES

1. John Pope-Hennessy, *Angelico* (Firenze, Italia: Becocchi Editore, 1981), 41.
2. Our instructress explained that the inspiration for this assignment came from an article by Sr. Mary of the Savior, O.P., "Praying before a Picture," *Dominican Monastic Search*, v.17 (1998).

ST. CATHERINE AND HOLY DISCRETION

Sister Mary Joseph, O.P.
Farmington Hills, MI

Over the years, and especially since Saint Catherine has been declared a Doctor of the Church, learned articles have been written and erudite lectures have been delivered all around the world on every conceivable aspect of her life and teaching; e.g.: "Catherine and the Papacy," "The Influence of Catherine on Diplomacy," "The Influence of Catherine's Writings on the Italian Language," etc., etc. I considered, whimsically, entitling this article: "St. Catherine and Zen Buddhism, or: "How St. Catherine Helped Me to Solve My *Koan*." The connection would be tenuous, but there is a connection, at least in my mind.

koan

One of the goals of Zen Buddhism, as of Christianity, is "enlightenment." But enlightenment in any religion is not easy to come by. In Zen, one way to it is through the so-called *koan* exercise. A *koan* is a paradoxical problem which is given to a disciple by the Master. It has no rational solution.

"What was the shape of your original face before you were born?"

"If we know the sound of two hands clapping, what is the sound of one hand clapping?"

"MU" (Nothing)¹

The riddle is pondered unceasingly by the disciple for days and sometimes months, or intermittently for years. Often this constant pondering on paradox creates great anguish in the soul, and without proper guidance by the Master, can result in a psychic breakdown; but finally the mind "breaks through" to a solution, which often seems as irrational as the problem. Actually, as the Master of Zen will explain, the solution has nothing to do with logic, with the activity of the discursive intellect. It is meant to bring the mind beyond the discursive process in order that it may operate on a deeper level. This, it would seem, is often the case with many inventions and other productions of the mind which we sometimes call "flashes of genius" or "intuitions." We hear of a person waking up in the middle of the night with a sudden solution of a difficult problem with which he or she had been wrestling unsuccessfully. Newton, watching the fall of an apple from a tree, received a flash of enlightenment on the law of gravity.

Buddhist psychology which, it is said, closely resembles modern depth psychology, divides the psyche into as many as eight or nine levels of consciousness. Ordinarily we live at the superficial level of discursive reasoning, but to attain to enlightenment we must penetrate to a deeper level. That is why St. John of the Cross keeps stressing that we must not get hung up on the activity of our intellects.

Many young people have turned to Zen and other Eastern religions in their thirst for an experience of God. It has been suggested, even by Zen Masters themselves, that Christians can better attain enlightenment by the proper reading of their own Scriptures.²

The Scriptures are full of *koan*, i.e., of sayings that, though they do not mock reason as the Zen *koan* seems to do, nevertheless puzzle and confound reason.

"He who would save his life will lose it."

"Let the dead bury their dead."

"The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die."

"He who believes in Me shall never die."

The whole of Scripture, in fact, can be looked upon as one great *koan*, something we can never consider that we have fully grasped or understood. Even in the most familiar passages, new lights are always forthcoming in a prayerful reading. As spiritual writers point out, even texts that seem dry and uninteresting, e.g., genealogies, can become bearers of grace if we read them with humility and reverence. We must sit down before the Scriptures as a beggar before the palace of the king, and wait patiently for them to open their treasures to us.

my koan

A Scriptural "*koan*" which I have been pondering for some time occurs at the end of chapter nine in *Mark*. I have not, of course, given it the concentrated attention demanded in Zen practice because, for one thing, I do not think that it is the most important text in the Bible; it is just intriguing.

Jesus had been instructing His disciples in the necessity of making any sacrifice in order to avoid sin: "If your right hand is an occasion of sin to you, cut it off It is better to go into eternal life maimed than to go whole and entire into hell where everyone will be salted with fire" (Mk 9; NAB). Then, at the very end comes this little saying, which really does not seem to have much connection with the foregoing: "Keep salt in your hearts, and you will be at peace with your neighbor."

When it came to solving my *koan*, I discovered that as a Zen Buddhist I make a good Christian, since I often used the discursive intellect in pondering its meaning. I tried first of all to see what I could find on the meaning of salt in a religious context.

Now salt, as I learned from a biblical dictionary, always used for seasoning of food and preservation of things from corruption, had from earliest times a sacred and religious character. Orientals used to cleanse and harden the skin of newborns with it. By strewing it on a piece of land they dedicated that land to the gods. Jewish law prescribed it for the sacrifices: "Do not let the salt of the covenant be lacking from your cereal offerings" (Lv 2). In a passage in *Exodus*, after giving minute directions for the making of incense Yahweh says: "This fragrant powder is to be salted and so kept pure and sacred." In Mt 13, salt symbolizes wisdom, though perhaps it originally had an exorcistic signification. Salt was used in the old baptismal rite of the Church and signified, according to the Catechism of the Council of Trent, three things: deliverance from the corruption of sin, a relish for good works, and a delight for the food of divine wisdom.

These details give interesting little leads as to the possible meaning of my *koan*: that it preserves from the corruption of sin; that it makes sacred; that it consecrates the object or being for the service of God; that it gives a spiritual taste for good. But what is this salt?

light from Catherine

One day when I was reading the *Dialogue* of St. Catherine I received a new light on my *koan*. The Eternal Father is speaking to Catherine about the virtue of discretion. He has just explained that the soul must never incur the guilt of sin to help her neighbor, even spiritually (recall the above passage from *Mark*: "If your right hand is an occasion of sin..."), for, says the Father to Catherine: "It would not be just that creatures who are finite and created by Me, should be saved through offense done to Me, who am the Infinite Good."³ Then He goes on to say: "And this true love knows well, because she carries with herself the light of **holy discretion**, that light which dissipates all darkness, takes away ignorance, and is the **condiment** of every instrument of virtue" (ch. 11).⁴

"Holy discretion," the Father continues, "is a prudence which cannot be cheated, a fortitude which cannot be beaten, a perseverance from end to end, stretching from Heaven to earth, that is, from the knowledge of Me to knowledge of self, and from love of Me to love of others" (ch. 11). "And these fruits (virtues) cannot be taken from her without her will, inasmuch as they are all **flavored** with discretion...." (ch. 10).

"[Holy discretion] is...the condiment of every virtue." For me this phrase opened up many spiritual vistas to be explored with the help of our sister Catherine, in whom we truly have a gold mine. But first, because discretion is, I believe, so central to her doctrine, and because it is such an important theme in the history of monasticism, I would like to trace, if only sketchily, its development in spiritual theology in order to see Catherine's teaching in its proper perspective. And the place my mind turns to is Scripture - to see the roots of "discretion" in Scripture.

discretion/discernment

A brief consideration of the origins of the words used can be helpful. Our English words "discrete" and "discern" both come from the Latin *dis* (apart) and *cernere*: to separate, distinguish between. The Latin is in turn a translation of the Greek word *diakrisis* which refers to judging, dividing, distinguishing, and is used also for "discerning the spirits." In Hebrew there are words for choosing, selecting, scrutinizing, testing to select the best.⁵

Another word group that appears frequently is based on *dokimadzein* which also means to test, discern, prove, to judge something good or worthy. The root means one who watches, or one who judges who may be admitted into the camp - which also brings to mind another monastic virtue or practice, that of *nepsis* or watchfulness: watching over one's thoughts especially, to exclude unworthy or harmful ones, this in turn being necessary for purity of heart.

Studying the Scriptural uses of these word groups, it soon becomes apparent that what we are to distinguish, to discern, are above all "the spirits," the motions within us toward good and evil. This theme of the "spirits" is also a fascinating study. A *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*⁶ distinguishes four meanings of "spirit":

1. Wind. "Spirit" (*ruah* in Hebrew) is originally the breath, especially that of the wind, which in turn is seen to be a manifestation of Yahweh. There is a mysterious power in this wind: it can strike with an incredible violence; at other times it can manifest itself as a gentle murmur; it can dry up with its hot breath, and it can hover over the waters, making them fruitful. It is beyond man's control. "The spirit (wind) breathes where it will" (Jn 3).

2. Respiration. Yahweh breathed into man the breath of life. Man is not master of this breathing, though he cannot do without it. He dies when this breathing stops. Like the wind, man's breathing comes from God and returns to Him at death.

3. The spirit of man. All the feelings and emotions of man's soul are expressed by his breathing. Fear (Gn 41:18); anger (Jg 8:3); joy (Jr 45:22); and pride - all affect man's breathing. In man the *ruah* seems co-extensive with his conscious being. To give up this spirit into the hands of God is to emit one's final breath in the physical sense, and at the same time to surrender to God one's very being.

4. The spirits in man. The consciousness of man sometimes seems invaded by a strange power which is not his own. Powerful attractions toward both good and evil can be experienced; now one, now the other; sometimes both forces warring for the upper hand ("the good which I will, I do not do"). Since God is seen as the ultimate cause of all things, the Hebrew mentality attributes all these motions, indiscriminately, to Him, e.g.: "God sent... a spirit of jealousy," of perversity, of hatred, of giddiness, of prostitution, as well as "of justice, of holy zeal," upon individuals and groups.

In some key passages the Old Testament begins to give expression to the concept of a holy and sanctifying Spirit who transforms from within; e.g.: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...." "I will take away your stony hearts...." "I will put My spirit within you...." (Ez). The Spirit of the Lord can take men and transform them so that they do deeds far surpassing their native ability. In a special way, Yahweh gives His spirit to leaders.

The New Testament *pneuma* continues many of the Old Testament usages of "spirit." It is a source of human life that leaves at death (Mt 27:50). Paul contrasts spirit with flesh, the former being a principle of goodness and life, the latter of sin, corruption and death. There is also the evil spirit, Satan. The New Testament testifies to Jesus' struggle against Satan's kingdom. His disciples also must be aware of his wiles. Most importantly, in the New Testament the *pneuma* is the Holy Spirit Himself, sent by the Father and the Son.

The Christian ascetical tradition has adopted from two places in the New Testament - 1 Cor 12:10 and 1 Jn 4:1 - the formulas "discernment of spirits" and "to discern spirits." In Jewish literature such formulas did not appear until the Qumran period (and then were applied uniquely to the testing of candidates for the community).⁷

The Old Testament does not speak specifically of discernment of spirits. The words from which the Greek and Latin expressions are derived were used in different contexts. Actually, however, the whole of the Bible could be said to be one great lesson in learning to distinguish the good from the evil, the better from the best. We are constantly being presented with choices between opposites, and no doubt is left in our minds as to which we are to choose. The Bible places before us radical contrasts, the most basic being, perhaps, good/evil (or God/world). Another extremely important contrast is life/death. There are also: the righteous/the wicked; light/darkness; wise man/fool; truth/error; true prophet/false prophet, and so on.

The New Testament continues these themes and adds more; for example: wheat/chaff; those who cling to God's will/those who follow human passions; the hard road, narrow gate/the easy and wide road; divine wisdom/human learning; the humble/the proud.

By the time of St. Paul and St. John, each Christian is invited to be guided personally by the Holy Spirit. "Be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God" (Rm 12:1,2). "[P]roving what is well pleasing to God. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness...." (Eph 5). "And this I pray: that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding, that you may approve the better things...." (Phil. 1:9,10). Paul describes an inner experience of God's Spirit whose results are light, peace, charity and acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord. "But the fruit of the Spirit is charity...." (Gal 5:22). The First Letter of John adds that the experience of the Spirit has to be the same as the teaching received from the Apostles (1 Jn 2:24; 4:6). It insists upon the confidence that this experience gives for the day of judgment (4:17). John and Paul, then, appear less preoccupied with determining the symptoms of an evil spirit than with indicating the signs of a good spirit. Their purpose is primarily positive.

monastic discernment

Discernment was held to be of the highest importance by the Fathers of the Desert. Abba Moses calls it "no ordinary virtue which can be acquired by human effort, but ... truly a gift of grace - a virtue which the monk must pursue with all zeal."⁸ Abba Moses then recalls that when he was a boy in the region of the Thebaid, all the elders had gathered together around the Blessed Antony to discuss the pursuit of perfection. And the question was asked: "What virtue or observance is most necessary for a monk to reach the heights of perfection?" Each participant offered a view "according to the bent of his own mind. And some made it consist of zeal in fasting and vigils, because a soul that has been brought low by these, and has thus acquired purity of heart and body, will more easily be united to God"; others thought that perfection was to be found "in despising all things, as the mind, deprived of all things that might entangle it, could rise the more easily to God"; others maintained that withdrawal from the world, solitude and silence, was the path to perfection; others stressed the duties of charity, and so on. Finally, Abba Antony spoke, pointing out that while all the things mentioned are of the greatest value, no virtue is more important than discretion, for without it the others are in danger of being frustrated. "Discretion," he says, "is the source, the guardian and the ruler of all the virtues."⁹ (To get a little ahead of ourselves: St. Thomas, who treated of discretion under the title of "prudence," says practically the same thing. And I have read that when the cause of a Servant of God is being considered and the Roman Congregation begins to investigate the heroicity of his or her virtues, the very first thing examined is the virtue of prudence, since if the person did not have prudence in a high degree, he or she could not possibly possess any other virtue in an heroic degree.)

Cassian, who is reporting the conference, goes on to insist on the testimony of the Fathers that in order to possess discretion one must be truly humble (something we will want to recall when we get to Catherine).

Discretion is a corollary of the gift of discernment of spirits. It is a question of taking practical measures in accord with a person's interior impulses. Each one must learn to "test the spirits" in his/her own heart, and to distinguish the good from the evil, as well as the better from the good. For the Desert Fathers, this was why it was important for a young monk to be placed under the immediate supervision of an older, experienced monk who would guide him in this matter. And that was why humility was so essential: the young monk had to have the humility to go to the older man and expose all his thoughts and impulses to him so that together they

could discern whether these came from God or the devil or disordered passion. The early Fathers did not speak of "manifestation of conscience," but of "manifestation of thoughts."

St. Benedict, whose Rule is well known for its discretion, especially in comparison with other Rules of his time, was anxious that the Rule be so tempered that "the strong may still have something to long after, and the weak may not draw back in alarm." For St. Benedict discretion is the ability to strike, in all circumstances, the balance between excess and defect, and it enables the individual to determine what is the best thing to do here and now according to particular circumstances. St. Benedict viewed the monastic life ideally as being a preparation for the eremitical life. Thus he considered the Rule only as a basic framework which would enable each monk under the guidance of the abbot or his spiritual father to follow the call of grace to its fullest. The Rule was thus never meant to hold each one down to the least common denominator, but rather to be a springboard from which each one could rise up to the heights of the spiritual and mystical life according to his own particular graces.

models of discretion?

When seen from this point of view it is easy to conclude that the choice of the best means to attain the end will not always mean the choice of the easiest way. For this reason it is false to equate discretion with moderation or "caution" or "worldly prudence." I think we often miss the point when we speak of "being prudent." Discretion, as must be clear by now, is another name for supernatural prudence, and, as I mentioned, it was under this heading that St. Thomas treated this virtue. Now, to "moderate," says the Angelic Doctor, is the proper work of the virtue of temperance, while the work of prudence is to judge of and make choice of the best possible means for attaining the end desired, whether these means be easy, difficult or even heroic. Discretion does indeed find a middle course between rigorism and laxism, but the golden mean is not necessarily the easiest way. The "discreet" thing to do, i.e., the thing which out of all possible choices of action is the best calculated to attain the end, may sometimes be the most difficult of all the possibilities - and may even appear "imprudent" or "indiscreet" from a purely human viewpoint. Thus, as we shall see when we get back to the *Dialogue*, St. Catherine, putting her mouth to the pus-filled wound of the old woman who had tormented and maligned her, was being very discreet since this was what God's grace was asking of her at that moment. Likewise, St. Benedict rolling his bare body in thorns,¹⁰ and St. Dominic desiring to sell himself into slavery for the welfare of his neighbor, were being discreet for the same reason, yet these are practices which one could not write into a community Rule.

Is there any room for this "holy discretion" (or sometimes seeming "indiscretion") in community? Can communities be led by the Spirit to do things that might seem imprudent from a human point of view? I truly believe they can. An example that comes to mind is the story of an Evangelical Sisterhood, the Sisters of Mary, stepping out in faith to build a house of prayer and praise without funds; beyond this, they made the decision to depend entirely on the donations of the faithful - even to the point of not ordering any food for themselves. A current example might be the attempt to make a foundation in Vancouver when our Dominican monasteries are strapped for personnel. I wonder how often Our Lord must say to souls and to communities today: "Oh you of little faith!" In a poem of Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C., "Eastern Epiphany," she contrasts the eager enthusiasm of the wise men "hurrying with crowns a-tilt" to the stable, with the carefully measured performance of "duty" by modern Western Christians: "An hour for worship and plans for the evening" (one hour once a week grudgingly given to the Lord, and the rest of the day, the rest of the week, for our own selfish interests).

"This is all we are obliged to do; no need to be a fanatic about it." I love Mother M. Francis's conclusion: "Pity our pale sanity, poor Child."

discretion in the *Dialogue*

Coming now to the *Dialogue*, I would like first, as a sort of foundation for my reflections, to share with you the insights that came to me some years ago when our community was discussing it.

In my study of the first part, which is now called "The Way of Perfection,"¹¹ I made an interesting discovery which threw an entirely new light on it, and even on the entire work. In the outline of the *Dialogue* given in Sr. Suzanne Noffke's Introduction, the first petition (for Catherine herself) is said to be a plea that she be allowed to suffer in atonement for sin. But if you read this section carefully, it appears that Catherine made, not one but two petitions for herself, or at least one petition with two parts. We do not see this in her own words, where only the plea to suffer for sin is expressed, but we do see it in the response of the Father: "You asked Me, dearest daughter You also asked Me...." (ch. 4, N29). When I realized this, everything in the entire section just seemed to fall into place. The two petitions and response became like a scaffolding for the entire section and, in a certain way, for the whole book. The second last chapter seems to support this (ch. 166, N361-362).

Of the two petitions, or two parts of the one petition, the second is definitely the more basic. In fact, it seems to be in a sense the very backbone of the entire work. Thus, it is more logical to take this reply first.

"The way to arrive at a perfect knowledge and enjoyment of Truth [who is God] is for the soul to abide in humble self-knowledge, circumscribed and bounded and 'seasoned' by knowledge of God" [i.e., remembrance of His love and goodness to her]. In most places "knowledge of Me" is conjoined to knowledge of self. (Cf. the parable of the tree in ch. 10; see also ch. 13.)

- a. In this way, the soul grows in humility and self-hatred and desire for reparable suffering.
- b. She grows in love and desire for God, the infinite Good, and in desire to give Him His "due," i.e., infinite praise and glory; and in desire for the salvation of souls which are so dear to Him.
- c. She grows in love of neighbor and in desire for their salvation; to this end she desires to suffer greatly. She also desires to bring forth the virtues on her neighbor, by counselling, continuous prayer, etc.

We can see here a common element: **desire**.

The answer to the second petition is: How pleasing to God is the fervent desire to suffer for the salvation of souls!

- a. However, the affections must not be placed primarily in **penance**, but in **virtue**. The virtues must flow from charity and patient humility. (Thus they are discreet.)
- b. Not all pains and sufferings sent by God are given as punishment; some are merciful corrections.

- c. Desire and contrition of heart suffice both for the guilt and the punishment in oneself and sometimes in others (if they receive this grace won for them with contrition and desire; otherwise it satisfies for the guilt only).
- d. Every virtue and every defect is obtained by means of our neighbor; virtues are strengthened by their contraries.

This sets the stage for the discussion of discretion - a most important aspect of Catherine's doctrine.

a solution for my *koan*

Perhaps now we can return to my *koan*: "Keep salt in your hearts...." If you have the time and inclination, read the section, "The Way of Perfection" (better still, read the entire *Dialogue*) with the theme of discretion in mind. The more I think about it, the more I marvel at the exalted foundation on which Catherine places her teaching about this virtue. "Exalted"; "foundation"; the two words seem like a contradiction, and yet they are not. Catherine in a sense takes up where most of us tend to leave off in our thinking on discretion.

I am reminded of the story of a little boy whose father took him to the top of the Empire State Building. They went up and up on the elevator, got off, got into another elevator, went up and up. Finally the little boy turned to his father: "Daddy, does God know we're coming?" Catherine is like that second elevator. As a true Dominican, she goes right to the heart of divine Reality, just as she herself was drawn there by Sweet Truth Himself: "Daughter, do you know who I am, and what you are? I am He Who Is; you are that which is not." This is the initial and basic "discernment" of the entire supernatural life, and once we have learned to make that discernment, that distinction, all the rest follows with unbending logic. God is all; I am nothing. This is Catherine's criterion of what is discreet, and the implications are manifold.

Catherine's biblical mentality

Some years ago, our community listened to tapes of a seminar on St. Catherine of Siena. One talk was on Catherine as a "biblical" woman, and that theme made me think of several aspects which were not mentioned. They are related to "holy discretion."

Catherine's writing is biblical in that, like Scripture itself, it is a continuous teaching on discernment. We see over and over again the biblical "two ways." The principal image she gives us (it is really the heart of her work, it seems to me) is, of course, that of "the Bridge." Here all mankind is divided into: (a) those who go over the bridge, and (b) those who travel under the bridge (the biblical "way of the just and way of the wicked"). We have treatments of those who trust in God and those who do not; the obedient and the disobedient; good ministers and bad ministers; the tree of life and the tree of death. Besides discerning the good from the bad, Catherine also helps us to discern the better from the good: we have the three lights, the three steps on the bridge, the five stages of tears. The entire *Dialogue* seems like a Treatise on Discretion.

Catherine describes rather than defines. Rather than asking what something is, what is its essence, she describes how it works, how it manifests itself. She comes closest to defining discretion when she says: "It is the only child of self-knowledge and, wedded to charity, produces all the virtues." We have already seen her description of discretion as the salt or

"condiment" of all the virtues. Her most picturesque description comes in chapter 10 with her image of the tree.

My own definition, based on a variety of her descriptions, would be: A rightly ordered judgment and choice, based on the knowledge of self and of God (i.e., who He is and what I am), as to means and their measure, flowing from a rightly ordered love. By "rightly ordered love" I mean: hatred of self and love of God; a love never flowing from our own disordered self-love. "The discreet virtues are the sign that self-will is dead." "Doing the truth in charity."

Another way in which Catherine is biblical is in her speaking of love and hate. Remember Jesus' own hard saying: "If any man will come after Me, and does not hate father and mother, he cannot be my disciple."

I mentioned above that the entire Way of Perfection (chs. 3-12) seems to be structured on the Father's reply to Catherine's two-fold petition: (1) Grant me the will to know and love the Supreme Truth; and (2) Let me suffer in this life for my sins and punish my neighbors' sins in me. Discretion is not a third or distinct point, but is intimately connected with the two petitions.

We saw above that "knowledge of self and of Me" leads to three attitudes, one to self, one to God and one to neighbor: humility and self-hatred and desire for reparative suffering; love and desire for God the infinite Good, and desire to give Him His due, which is infinite praise and glory; love of neighbor and desire for the neighbor's salvation. So we see: Discretion demands that we be willing to sacrifice a thousand lives, if that were possible, for the salvation of neighbor (again, discretion is not simply "moderation"); on the other hand, it forbids us to do ourselves the least injury of sin in order to aid our neighbor (cf. St. Thomas's teaching), for this would not be loving what God loves and hating what He hates, as is demanded by discretion and by true charity from which discretion springs.

The soul filled with hatred and contempt of self, desires to endure pains in reparation for her sinfulness and ingratitude. Discretion forbids that we place undue affection in penances. We might be loving this finite thing beyond what God does. Thus, the "discreet virtues show that self-will is dead."

Catherine also deals biblically with the question of "judgmental attitudes." It seems to me that this whole area also fits into the larger idea of discretion. In the section on the three lights (ch. 98ff.), Catherine had asked the Father to give her some guidelines for her judgments. Thus we see:

1. Discretion forbids that I think more highly of myself than of another because I do more penance; I could be preferring the one God does not prefer.
2. The same holds for judging between two other persons.
3. Discretion forbids that, by counsel, I send everyone down the same road of spirituality; it may not be the path willed for him or her by God.
4. Discretion forbids that I judge my neighbor to be in sin or darkness; I would be despising one whom God loves.

In fact, the wisest judgment is not to judge at all. "Leave off judgment," the Father tells Catherine in several places, "since judgment belongs to Me, not to you. Leave off **judgment** and take up **compassion**." This reminds us that St. Thomas connects the beatitude of the merciful with the virtue of prudence, along with the gift of Counsel. The obvious conclusion is

that, for all of us, the most prudent counsel we can receive or give, is to be merciful - merciful in our actions, merciful in our thoughts and judgments. Why? Simply because we ourselves are so miserable and in need of mercy, that it behooves us to extend mercy to others. We have Our Lord's own words: "Blessed are the merciful; they shall obtain mercy." "If you want to avoid judgment, stop passing judgment." "For with the measure you measure out, it will be measured back to you." "You worthless wretch; I forgave you all the debt; should you not have been in turn merciful to your fellow servant?" Indeed, it is most prudent to be merciful.

When we turn to the section on "Providence," we see that discretion forbids that I should complain or be "scandalized" at the annoyances and trials that God permits. I would not be loving what God loves, i.e., my perfection; I would be setting my will in opposition to His by my wrong judgment about His love in permitting or sending this trial, judging that to be evil which He had permitted for my good. In other words, self-will is not dead.

One of the most striking manifestations of discretion concerns the virtue of justice. Discretion desires to render to each (God, neighbor, self) what is due. To God: unmeasured praise, honor; reference of all good to Him. To self: self-contempt and hatred, self-distrust. To neighbor: the debt of love, of humble, continuous prayer, the readiness to sacrifice one's life a thousand times if that were possible, as also temporal goods (but, no sin).

Just think! There is nothing (outside of sin) that is not our neighbor's due - not in charity, but in plain justice. Think what we could get ourselves into if we were to take this statement at face value, if we really dared to take it seriously. It is downright frightening, because I know in the depths of my heart how quickly I tend to "draw the line" when it comes to my neighbor; how easily I conclude: "That's asking too much... that's going too far." But if discernment tells me I must be willing to sacrifice my life a thousand times (to say nothing of my possessions - and perhaps that most precious possession, "time"), well, there's not much that could be asked or demanded that is beyond that. And it is my neighbor's "due"! Most of us, I think, are tempted to pass quickly over the full consequences of statements like Catherine's, just as we tend to gloss over the "hard sayings" of the Gospel. We say to her as the Athenians said to Paul: "Er...we will hear you on this another time." "I'm too young to die!"...for it is nothing less than a death to self that is being asked. Yet this is really no more than what Our Lord had already demanded: "Give to anyone who asks; and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn him away" (Mt 5:42). And He tells us further: "When you have done all that has been commanded you, say: 'We are unprofitable servants; we have only done what we ought.'"

conclusion

It would be interesting to go into Catherine's teaching on all the virtues, but I think we begin to see how she helped me solve my "*koan*" by her teaching that discretion is the condiment of all the virtues. "Keep salt in your hearts, and you will be at peace with your neighbors," Our Lord tells us. I think that with the salt of discretion in our hearts, we will be at peace, not only with our neighbors, but with God and with ourselves.

How do we lose our peace with God? Is it not when we set our own will against his? (Cf. N92.) Or abandon charity for the sake of spiritual quiet (N131)? Or serve in the hope of reward or pleasure (N281)? How do we lose peace with our neighbor? Is it not again when there is a clash of wills? When we feel that we are being imposed upon, our "rights" violated? When we judge others? But if through holy discretion we desire to give our neighbor his due, even to sacrificing our lives a thousand times (to say nothing of temporal goods), when can any

conflict arise? "She has no eyes for herself, for seeking her own spiritual or material comfort....she shuns no burden, from whatever source it may come" (N188).

"And because their love is well-ordered [discreet],...they are never scandalized in those they love, nor in any person ... and therefore they assume no right to be concerned with the intentions of other people, but only with discerning My merciful will [through their actions]" (N190).

"Keep salt in your hearts, and you will be at peace" - with God, with your neighbor, with yourself.

▷◁

NOTES

1. Cf. William Johnston, *Mystical Theology: The Science of Love* (London: Harper Collins Religious, 1995), 184.
2. Cf. Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith* (NY: Riverhead Books, 1998), 83-84.
3. My first reading of the *Dialogue* was in the Algar Thorold translation (London: Kegan Paul, Trench., Trübner and Co., Ltd., 1896). The 1943 Newman Press (Westminster, MD) "abridged version" was also available to me.
4. I have added the emphases.
5. Cf. J. Guillet et al. (Tr. I. Richard), *Discernment of Spirits* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1970), 17-26: "The Old Testament."
6. X. Léon-Dufour, ed., (NY: Seabury Press, 2nd ed. 1973), 569-570. I use Léon-Dufour's four divisions and describe in my own way the content of each.
7. This was in my study notes, though I failed to record the reference.
8. See the Second Conference of Abba Moses, ch. 1. There is a recent translation by Boniface Ramsey, O.P.: *John Cassian: The Conferences* (NY: Paulist Press, 1997). I have used mainly *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, v. XI (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1978).
9. Second Conference of Moses, ch. IV.
10. *Dialogues* of St. Gregory, Bk 2, Sec. 2.
11. Cf. S. Noffke's translation (NY: Paulist Press, 1980), which I hereafter cite as N.



❖❖❖❖❖ MYRRH-BEARERS ❖❖❖❖❖

The Myrrh-bearers came of a dawn
to a tomb, to perform the required ablutions.
All unknown they came to an empty tomb,
came to a tomb sorrow-laden,
came all unknowing.
Myrrh was a bitter spice,
a spice of death and sorrow.
It was part of the song:
“My Beloved was to me a bundle of bitter myrrh
between my breasts.”
Myrrh to express their grief; myrrh to wrap the dead body.
They came stunned, drained of life,
came to the tomb all unknowing,
Like walking dead themselves.

What of the springtime joy with the Master;
the tramping about in Galilee? the importance of being a part;
the aspirations and all the stories. How could it end so?
Where had their dreams led them?

They came to the tomb.
Would they recognize an angel; could they grasp his words?
Would they see him, bowed as they were with the bitter weight of the myrrh?
They came to anoint the Risen One: he anointed them.

Whom do you anoint?



Sister Mary of Jesus
Bronx, NY

COMMENTARY ON THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE NUNS OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS

(Part II: Common Life, Vows, Observance)

Let us follow in the footsteps of our Father St. Dominic

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(This is the second installment of the Commentary on the Constitutions by Sister Marie-Ancilla. Part One: "Commentary on the Fundamental Constitution," appeared in Dominican Monastic Search, 1998. Translation by Sr. Mary Thomas, O.P., Buffalo, NY).

PART TWO FIRST SECTION OF THE FIRST DISTINCTION: THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

I. PARALLEL BETWEEN THE THEMES OF THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTION AND THE FIRST SECTION OF THE FIRST DISTINCTION

FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTIONS	DISTINCTION I, SECTION I
§3 Religious consecration (by the vows of chastity poverty, and obedience)	Chap. I, Articles II, III, IV We are dealing with values: obedience, chastity and poverty. In addition, under the term "religious consecration" are placed the common life and regular observance.
§4 Common life and liturgical celebration	Chap. I, Article I, and Chap. II.
§5 Enclosure	Nos. 36 - 45; 50 - 53.
Silence	Nos. 46 - 49.
Work	Chap. IV.
Study - Lectio Divina	Chap. III.
Prayer	Chap. II.
Penance	No. 61.

II. FOLLOWING CHRIST IN THE DOMINICAN WAY (1)

1. All the elements of our life form part of the following of Christ.

The Dominican following of Christ is the subject of Distinction I, Section I.

Distinction I, which is entitled *The Life of the Sisters*, studies the life of the Sisters at two levels. In Section I the life of the Sisters is shown in its full flowering, and in Section II formation is explained.

The image of the life of a Dominican nun in its fullness is found therefore in Section I, being thus placed in its entirety under the title of *The following of Christ*. For St. Dominic, to follow Christ meant to do all that the Apostles did together from the day when they heard his call: "Follow me."

And so for us, everything that makes up our life, our way of following Christ, is clothed in the Dominican mode in each of its elements, which are all solidly of one piece and have a reciprocal influence upon each other.

The interaction and balance of all the elements of our life give a special character to each of them. These actions are inseparable from each other, and if one is suppressed the Dominican balance is lost. Our prayer, for example, is influenced by the end of the Order, the salvation of men; our obedience has a special character which flows from our common life, etc.

Thus none of the elements of our life of "following Christ" is common to all religious: all bear the character or stamp of the Order. This is why we must take on all of them in the unity of our profession. This is why it is so important to understand that all the parts of the act of profession are in a sense on the same level, all hold together, and cannot be separated as if there were a succession in their timing, something which is common to all the world and something proper to us. The whole is included in a single vow.

2. The elements of our following of Christ

Chapter 1: Religious consecration

Chapter 2: Prayer

Chapter 3: Hearing, studying and keeping the Word of God

Chapter 4: Work

At first glance we see that Chapters 2, 3, and 4 form a part of our Dominican life. The first Chapter has a more mysterious title: religious consecration.

It gathers together the elements of our profession over and above the former. Our profession engages us to liturgical prayer, study, and work. These values do indeed have a Dominican character, but they are addressed to all Christians, while the first Chapter is concerned with practices which are only counsels for Christians. Religious are obliged to them by a promise, because they discern in them a better way of carrying out what all should do: to strive for the perfection of charity. These values are: commitment to the common life, to obedience, celibacy, poverty, and regular life. This group has been designated by the word consecration, because these engagements, which distinguish us among Christians, reserve us more completely for God and, consequently, give us new possibilities of realizing the consecration to God of all Christians effected by baptism.

We are not therefore the only consecrated persons. All Christians are basically consecrated to Christ and to God forever. But through profession we take on new ways of realizing this

consecration. This is the justification for the title which, as Father Vicaire recognized, is debatable.

It is the first Chapter which is the most important.

3. Remarks on the plan

The plan chosen could lead to confusion. For chastity, fasting, etc., which are listed among the elements proper to religious, pertain in fact to every form of Christian life. On the other hand the liturgy, which in itself is for every Christian, receives a kind of development in religious life that gives it a place quite other than for a lay person. What differentiates it, therefore, is the radicality with which all the values making up our following of Christ are lived.

The reflection of the Church has privileged "the three counsels" as means permitting persons to live their baptismal consecration with greater radicality. Why instead of three should there not be five privileges? Is it not the entirety of all the elements of our following of Christ that constitutes a more radical way of uniting us to God?

The title which groups the five articles of Chapter I is moreover ambiguous: stressing the more radical means of realising a deepening of baptismal consecration, it minimizes the fact that religious consecration is before all a particular consecration.(2)

A further remark: the article on regular observance would be better placed at the end because, by definition, it includes all the other values, considered from different points of view. Moreover, the title is misleading since, save for a brief definition of observance, the Chapter in fact treats only of observances (although the word is not used, nor the qualifying expression "monastic").

Again, I would remark that among the observances which favor the "pillars" of observance, enclosure is placed at the head, even before observance has been defined. The clarity of the paragraph is blurred by this.

Taking into account all these remarks, the structure of the first Section of the first Distinction might have been clearer as follows:

- Chapter 1: Common life
- Chapter 2: Obedience
- Chapter 3: Chastity
- Chapter 4: Poverty
- Chapter 5: Prayer
- Chapter 6: the Word of God
- Chapter 7: Work
- Chapter 8: Regular observance - Observance
- Observances

CHAPTER I: RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION

LEGISLATIVE ORIGINS

The fifth article, on regular observance, was largely represented in the first Constitutions of the brethren as well as in those of St. Sixtus.

The first four articles, on the other hand, on common life, obedience, chastity, and poverty, had no legislative tradition in the Constitutions of the Order. Before 1932, they contained nothing on these subjects: in these areas one referred to the Rule of St. Augustine. Also, those who compiled the 1932 Constitutions started out with a plan a priori inspired by the new Code of Canon Law and composed a chapter on the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The present texts take their inspiration from the *Rule of St. Augustine* and from certain commentaries which already existed in the thirteenth century,(1) from needs of the present day, and in particular from the texts of Vatican Council II.

I. ARTICLE 1: COMMON LIFE

A: TEXT

(The text of Constitutions 2-16, with its endnotes, has been omitted here.)

B. COMMENTARY

The text of this article is almost identical with that of LCO, the first outline of which was made by Father Trémel.

Common life is the essential element of our Dominican following of Christ. "In our following of Christ," notes Father Vicaire, "paramount is common life in unanimity which, in the eyes of St. Dominic, was the very essence of the apostolic life, of the practice of life in the footsteps of Christ.

"What actualizes our following of Christ is our entrance by profession into a collective state which continues that of the apostles assembled by and with Christ and which includes the practice of all the counsels given by Christ to the apostles. Among these counsels from then on practiced collectively, the first was to belong to a 'college'; that was the common life."

1. Unanimity, the end of our religious life (LCM 2:I)

St. Augustine placed unanimity at the head of his Rule, that unity of minds and hearts which is presented in *Acts* as the charter of the primitive Church.

From the outset he stressed community life: the brothers have come to the monastery to live together, to live in a brotherhood which is characteristic of the entire Church. St. Augustine gave priority to this fraternity to be realized, because it was the essential characteristic of the Church.

Mutual love reaching out to God (in Deum) is the goal pursued by all, it is what everyone seeks.(9)

This common vocation is expressed by Augustine with the help of three biblical quotations: Ps. 32:1; 67:7; Acts 4:32.(10)

Humbert of Romans developed this theme of unanimity at length in his commentary on the Rule. He saw in it the starting point, the *raison d'être* of all the rest. But, he clarified, this unanimity ought to be in the Lord.(11) For not every kind of unanimity is good. The unanimity of a gang of thieves, for example, is very evil; it is not unanimity in the Lord!

"The first Constitutions of the brethren, like the Constitutions of St. Sixtus, began by recalling the beginning of the Rule of St. Augustine. Also," Father Vicaire continues, "with the two preceding rules of St. Augustine and St. Dominic, it placed common life at the head. Some were surprised at this. Because of the traditional concept of the imitation of Christ, who so stressed what were called the three vows, common life did not seem to them one of the fundamental obligations to which we are committed by profession.

"But St. Dominic, at the very beginning of the Order, had placed in our profession a promise of common life. In the first formula of profession of the Order, which is found in a paragraph of the first Constitutions dating probably from 1215, it is said that in making profession the brethren promise 'community and stability' and then promise obedience to their superior. In 1220 the formula was simplified, but the first one was significant." (12)

The end of no. 2:I is a little different from that of the corresponding paragraph of LCO 2C which reads: "This unity, going beyond the limits of each convent, reaches its fullness in communion with the province and the entire Order."

Communion with the Order is communion in charity with the other members of the Dominican family: the brethren, Sisters, and laity. In order for this communion to be real, unanimity should exist in the portion of the Order which is our community. Community life is not closed in upon itself.(13)

a. Our fraternal communion is apostolic (LCM 2:II)

The text is very close to Canon 602. But do they have a common source?

Our unanimity is rooted in the love of God: Humbert of Romans says that in order to live in unanimity, one must be attached to God alone, for all those who adhere to God alone are one with Him and are therefore one in God. And if God is the sole Good desired and loved, there will be a desire to share.(14) And further: it is rooted in the love of God-Love, whose design is to reconcile all men and women with each other and with Him. Thus our fraternal communion is very closely linked with the end of the Order, the salvation of all. It is the seal of preaching (cf. Jn 17: "that they may be perfectly one, so that the world may believe"). Unanimity is already an apostolic activity through witness, and love of unity will seek to communicate itself whether through preaching and prayer (for the brethren) or through prayer alone (for the nuns).

2. Spiritual sources and religious (or regular) sources of our common life (LCM 3)

Unanimity is the goal of our common life, but it should also nourish it. We shall therefore consider all that gives it birth and causes it to grow.

a: Spiritual sources (LCM 3:I) (15)

This paragraph condenses the essence of the foundation of a Dominican community. We find again here the teaching of St. Augustine and that of Humbert of Romans: the two share the same line of thought.

Let us note that the word *unus* is used five times in this paragraph, echoing the three uses in n. 2. This simple notation emphasizes the fact that all that will be said in this number merely develops the different aspects of the unity of mind and heart which the Sisters propose to achieve.

Another remark: this first paragraph is woven with scriptural quotations.

The Holy Spirit, source of our communion

Our fraternal communion finds its model in the first Christian community gathered together by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.(16) It is the same Spirit who gathers us together today. As St. Augustine said, "He causes those whom He gathers together to be undivided." (17) And Humbert of Romans, inviting the brethren to strive after unity in the Spirit, quotes Ph 1:27; Ep 4:3.(17 bis)

What did the Holy Spirit do, in fact, on Pentecost day? He converted and gathered together the first Christians simultaneously (Acts 2:41); they had henceforth but one mind and heart (Acts 4:32); they were united in prayer (Acts 2:46) and their fraternal communion (*ibid.*) was so great that the possession of personal property gave way to the sharing of common goods (Acts 2:44; 4:32).

Here we have the essence of the Church's life, and it is this common good of all Christians which is also the essence of our Dominican vocation. We seek to live it in all its power in a community.(18)

In fact, what elements does LCM 3 present as being lived in unanimity? Faith, contemplation, the liturgy (praise, the Eucharist), and poverty.

Concord and unanimity in faith

Humbert of Romans places unanimity in faith at the head of all the other unanimities: "Blessed unanimity which causes all to believe unanimously" (he returns to 1 Pt:3: *In fide omnes unanimes*). "St. Dominic wanted an Order that would live in the unanimity of faith even before deepening it, for how could they love without knowing? (St. Augustine). This is why his Order is essentially contemplative." (19)

Concord and unanimity in contemplation

"To give themselves unanimously to contemplation" (Humbert of Romans), such was indeed the specific character of the Order of St. Dominic: it is through the contemplative life - truth lived and savored - that the unanimity of the Order is attained.

Humbert of Romans commented thus on Acts 2:46: "One in mind and heart, they went up to the Temple each day. The daily prayer in the temple is contemplation; and the breaking of bread in their homes may refer to either spiritual or bodily bread."

Augustine had already established a close connection between these two values: concord and contemplation;(20) and for him the experience of fraternal concord was the only way of access to the Trinitarian mystery,(21) the model and very end of the Christian life.

Concord and praise

"To be unanimously eager in prayer" (Humbert of Romans): this describes the first Christians who frequented the Temple. St. Dominic held strongly to liturgical prayer in common, to unanimity in prayer. Cf. Also Augustine: "Only those praise God who dwell together as one (*in unum*)."(22)

Concord and the Eucharist

Here again Augustine enlightens us. The Holy Spirit, he tells us, makes us to be one body (23) through the Eucharist, which makes us members of Christ in communicating to us the Spirit

of the Risen Christ.(24) The Eucharist is the sacrament of fraternal concord, the bread of concord.(25)

Concord and holding all goods in common

The Rule of St. Augustine requires that we have nothing of our own and that all should be held in common. The goal is not only to be poor, but to depend on each other and in this way to be sisters/brothers who live in total fraternal communion even in the things of daily life.

St. Augustine had made progress on this. First he had been struck by the fact that when the Holy Spirit came down upon the first Christian community, the faithful had placed all their possessions in common (26) and henceforth had but one mind and heart. He perceived unanimity as the consequence of holding all goods in common.

Later, he would discover that it is unanimity, the *anima una* and the *cor unum*, wrought by the fire of the Holy Spirit, which requires that all things should be held in common. This too is the expression of unanimity.(27)

LCO, 3C adds at the end of the paragraph, "...and we are destined for the same work of evangelization."

b. Religious sources (LCM 3:II)

In paragraph I the life of prayer, the liturgy, and poverty are placed in close connection with the common life.

Paragraph II will show how our manner of "living the vows" is strongly characterized by our life of fraternal communion.

At the level of translation: *consentientes* is rendered in the official translation as: "having one project in common." Father Vicaire is hesitant about the use of the word "project." "This popular word," he says, "implies a philosophy, in particular the philosophy of Sartre, for whom a project is such a personal plan that each one determines it in his own way and thus creates his own values. An 'aim' on the other hand is the same for all and it is only through it that we are basically gathered together."

Consentio means "to be of one mind," "to agree with one another" (Dictionary of Blaise). Is it not preferable to translate it this way: "having one mind through obedience," in order to retain the idea that obedience, inseparable from a common seeking of the common good, is a factor of unanimity?

"Our obedience is not the obedience of an isolated woman who has made a private vow of obedience; it is primarily a necessity for community life. The same is true of our chastity, practiced in a state of common life; our vow of chastity is the vow of women sustained by a fraternal community. As for poverty, with all the more reason, it is the poverty of those living in community" (Father Vicaire).(28)

Thus it would clearly seem that the common life regulates all: prayer and liturgy, obedience, chastity, and poverty. All these values build up common life and begin to make the Church grow in the monastery.

"The following paragraphs are all new. They manifest one of the main intentions of the Chapter of the Order held in Chicago. At a time when people were preoccupied with considering all religious definitively committed in the Order by solemn profession as adults (cf. LCO 1 C, VI) and of favoring their sense of responsibility to the utmost, their spirit of initiative, and the dignity of persons, they wished to reinforce, as a balance, the role of the community, so that personalism might not turn into individualism but might on the contrary bear fruit in

service of the common good. Whence came the emphasis on the unanimous participation of all in the common life (LCO 6 C; LCM 7): the community should take charge of regular life and particularly of its penance." (Father Vicaire)

3. Determinations on conventual common life and on reciprocal collaboration (LCM 4) (29)

1. The bond constituted by charity (Col 3:14) and profession establishes equality among the Sisters.

However "the community is a body diversified by the presence of different charisms ordered to the good of all: some are prophets, others apostles... and all these gifts serve to build up the community into a diversified organism." (29 bis). This is what we are taught in the First Letter to the Corinthians (12:12ff). This text, like that of Acts 4:32-35, had strong influence on the birth of religious life.

It is therefore a question of achieving unity in diversity, which is fundamental in the Rule of St. Augustine. To live in fraternal communion (1 Cor 12:12) is to achieve unity in diversity.

It is necessary that all are open from the start to differences in regard to each one's capabilities and to different tasks.

It is not a question of leveling; on the contrary, the best qualified personalities should be affirmed. If personalities are crushed, there will be no Sisters to fill offices, for in order to govern, strong personalities are needed.

2. But there is a limit to the balance of personnel: the good of the community. For example, the anxieties that go with offices are for the sake of the common good. And in another area, each one ought to be ready to help those burdened with work, without hampering them.

4. The vigorous actions of the common life (LCM 5-7)

a. Fraternal correction (LCM 5)

This is a number proper to LCM; in LCO, regular chapter is placed in the section on common life.

The 1971 text has been modified, at the request of the commission charged with the revision of the Constitutions. In 1970 the Sisters charged with working out the elaboration of the Constitutions did not want fraternal correction to be mentioned, and so the commission had opted for two sentences from the Gospel. But the Council of Fathers who reviewed the text introduced a sentence which is presently at the beginning of No. 5. A new modification has just been made: the two sentences from the Gospel have been replaced by a quotation from the Primitive Constitutions.

b. Times of conversation (LCM 6)

The beginning of I and II are proper to LCM.

Community recreations are reintroduced. It is no longer mentioned that they may be held in groups. The revision commission expressly proposed: "various times for community conversation..." but it was judged more opportune to use the traditional expression, recreation.

Their frequency is left to the free determination of each community.

It is new. It speaks of exchanges apart from recreations, and they remain either communal or particular. Their purpose is to deepen fraternal relationships.

c. The participation of all in the government of the monastery (LCM 7)

"The apostolic life" which is referred to in the parallel Number of LCO is replaced by "the contemplative life." Is this artificial?

No, replies Father Duval. For the participation of all in government serves fraternal communion but also the contemplative life. This common effort to direct the monastery has for its purpose to direct it toward its *raison d'être*: the contemplative life. Again, it is an element of peace.

This is supported by a quotation from Humbert of Romans who emphasizes the importance of unanimity in decisions to be made. Our communities, in fact, are not democratic communities but Gospel ones; they should tend to unanimity.

The democratic influence of the majority exists, but when the profound life of the monastery is at stake we need to try to reach a *consensus*.

In order to situate no. 6 of LCO in relation to no. 7 of LCM, Father Vicaire explains that when attempting to enhance the sense of responsibility of the brethren, it was desired to reinforce the role of the community. They also tried to multiply in conventual life the possibilities for collective interventions of the brethren, and from this flowed the final part of LCO 6 (which was not used in LCM): "Hence all communities should hold discussions with the purpose of thereby improving their work and regular life." Father Vicaire comments: "Here again it is a question of the entire apostolic life, that is, of both ministry and regular life. The community takes charge of its regular life and especially its penance, and determines it in a certain measure.... It is still more important that the question of ministry be thought out in common. Once again", he concludes, "it would be good if ways could be found to apply this rule to the Sisters: a question of ministries, work, activities of the community and of each one in the community."

It is in this sense that the addition made in our Constitutions on the participation of all in the government of the monastery (cf. Chapter on Government) should be read.

4. Particular questions (LCM 8-16)

a. The sick (LCM 8-12)

Note that Ordination 6, which refers to these Numbers, is new.

b. An open community life (LCM 13-14)

The community should be concerned about the Sisters' parents and family members.

The welcoming of guests, visitors and neighbors is included in the sense of the Rule of St. Augustine: charity comes first, that charity which binds all people together. And everything takes its value from this charity. It is interesting to notice that it is this dimension of welcome that has been retained, and not the Benedictine perspective (that is already found in the *Great Rules* of St. Basil): to see Christ in the guest. Which is, of course, not excluded!

On this passage, remarks Father Duval, an entire community reflection on welcome could be developed.

c. LCM 15

This is a new number which takes up LCO 120; 13 (cf. can. 707:2).

d. Prayer for the dead (LCM 16)

Regarding the weekly Mass at which the community prays for the dead, it is clarified that the intention of the Mass need not necessarily be applied to this intention. But to signify that it is a question of the prayer of the entire community, it is required to offer a universal prayer including intentions for the deceased. An imperative has replaced the "they may add" of the 1971 Constitutions.

The commission of friars and nuns charged with the revision of the Constitutions also asked that the Office of the Dead for a deceased Sister should replace the Office of the day. This was not adopted. Why? So as not to impose on those who wished to say the two Offices, or to require all communities to say the two Offices?

In what concerns the Ordinations of the Master of the Order regarding the dead, might it be good to clarify at the end of n. 16 that it is a question of the Ordinations which follow?

II. ARTICLE 2: OBEDIENCE

A: TEXT

(The text of Constitutions 17-21, with its endnotes, has been omitted here).

B. COMMENTARY

1. Preliminaries

First remark: the title of the article is not "the vow of obedience," but "obedience." It is a question of a value and not of the vow. Likewise the word "vow" does not appear in the title of articles 3 and 4. This, so as not to place the trilogy of the vows in the first place, which would diminish the meaning of our profession.

But this does not mean that in the Order obedience, chastity and poverty are not made the object of a vow. All we need do to be convinced of this is to read articles 2, 3 and 4.

Another remark: almost all the numbers of this article reproduce the texts of LCO. The few changes made will therefore need to be justified.

Before studying the paragraphs of this article, we need to begin by reflecting on what has been at stake. Here is what Father Vicaire says about it:

"The texts on obedience were the most worked over. They are based on a schema of Father Walgrave. Naturally these texts were discussed in lively fashion, for there are different traditions of religious obedience. Some would like to approach obedience from a vertical point of view: to obey superiors is to obey God; others prefer on the contrary to confront problems in community life: there is no common life without obedience. This means grave divergences in interpretation...

"Our obedience is first of all a necessity for the community. How can we abstract from the reality of life in community and pretend that religious obedience has as its primary end to allow us to imitate Christ obedient to his Father? First I ask myself what the relationship is between Christ obedient to God and the religious man or woman obeying a man or woman? The difference is more visible than the relationship, due to the fact that we have to obey a limited

and fallible man or woman, while Christ obeyed God, that is to say, someone who could not make a mistake. It is not at all the same thing.

"On the other hand, if religious consider that obedience is first of all a necessity for common life, in view of the common good, they will accept it unhesitatingly since they wish to live in community. They will understand then that the state of subjection in which they place themselves configures them to Him who, 'although He was God, did not hesitate to assume the condition of a slave and to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' In this case there is a true participation in the state of Christ, the state of voluntary subjection in which Christ placed himself, and henceforth one will accept obedience because one lives in community, and at the same time because obedience assures a participation with Christ in the condition he freely assumed in view of the common good of the Kingdom of God.

Our Dominican obedience is essentially communal, having as its model the obedience of the Apostles to Christ at the heart of the college of the Twelve and as its rule the common good of the Kingdom of God." (42) Obedience extends to the entire following of Christ as do the common life and observance.

All this is in the tradition of St. Thomas's theology, which places obedience among the virtues attached to the virtue of justice.(43)

2. The example of St. Dominic (LCM 17:I)

This paragraph - the work of Father Vicaire - first recalls the example of St. Dominic.

The same reference to St. Dominic is made at the beginning of articles 3 and 4. This has given the Commission assigned to LCM the idea of applying it to other articles.

It is then a question of a connection between obedience and the unity of the community. (The connection between obedience and the unity of the Order will be noted in II).

After Father Vicaire's theological insight regarding the preceding paragraph, which shows how obedience has the common good for its foundation, it is easy to understand the meaning of the end of I: obedience, which directs all the members of the community toward the same common good, is the principle of unity (cf. 3:II) and of fidelity to the purpose of the community.

3. Obedience and the unity of the Order (LCM 17:II)

a. The text of LCO

LCO 17, 2 is thus worded: "So in our formula of profession, only one promise is made, namely, of obedience to the Master of the Order and to his successors, according to the laws of the Brothers of the Order of Preachers. Thus the unity of our Order and of our profession, which rests on the unity of the head of the Order, whom all are held to obey, is preserved."

The text of LCM having been modified in relation to this text, we first need to try to understand the meaning of the text of LCO so as to understand that of the change that has been made.

How to understand the text of LCO?

A first interpretation would be to say that it is a matter of showing why, in our profession, only obedience is mentioned. Before appreciating this response, we need to begin by asking if it is accurate to say that in the Order we only make profession of obedience.(44)

Can St. Thomas be appealed to in support of this affirmation?

It does not seem so. For in the new translation of the Summa, note 13, IIa IIae, q. 186, a 7, ad 3, states clearly: "St. Thomas does not tell us that only the vow of obedience is expressed in the profession made by the Preachers, of whom he is one. This brief formula includes the whole reality of religious commitment. But it seems that St. Thomas would be favorable to the custom followed in the Church of expressing the three vows in the formula of profession." (45)

Historical argument

Here we must return to the text of Father Vicaire already cited, which comments on the meaning of the promise of obedience contained in our formula of profession: the fact that the opposite sense almost always held on this subject is very certainly at the bottom of the affirmation commonly enough asserted that, in our profession, only obedience is mentioned. "The formula of the Premonstratensians," he explains, "like that of most religious Orders of the time, included an individualized promise of obedience to the superior of the community and to his future successors. This promise goes back to the middle of the eleventh century, when the reform of diocesan canons was effected by a promise of obedience to their bishop (in Rome, to the Pope). Profession commits us to obedience to a superior. It only remained to individualize this superior, which was done by the promise following the profession. It is wrong to say that in the Order we make only the vow of obedience. We are vowed to everything contained in our law. The last promise to the superior is a throwback to a formality of the Middle Ages which only considered a person bound to another person by way of a formal declaration." (46)

It is clear, then, that we do not make only a vow of obedience; but, following our profession, which embraces all the elements of our life, we make a promise of obedience which explicitly refers to the superior to whom our obedience is directed.

In view of this twofold light, it would seem difficult to affirm that the purpose of this paragraph is to show why, in our profession, only obedience is mentioned.

What, then, is the meaning of the text?

Must not the purpose of this II be, therefore, to clarify what is the unique head on which the unity of all communities and the unity of profession depends? And to show the role played by obedience for that purpose?

But is it certain that the one who drew up this text established a distinction between profession and the promise of obedience? LCO 18, 2 leaves room for doubt on this score.

b. The text of LCM

This paragraph includes a modification regarding LCO. At the request of the Congregation for Religious, it has become: "Therefore in our profession we promise obedience to the Master of the Order according to our Constitutions."

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life refused to allow the nuns to use their ancient formula of profession identical with that of the brethren. Was this because of the autonomy of the monasteries, which makes the prioress not a delegate of the Master of the Order? In any case, the promise of obedience is not addressed solely to the Master of the Order but also to the prioress. This perhaps attenuates, for us, unity around one head.

It seems therefore that the point of the article is to emphasize that we make profession to the Master of the Order, which assures unity of profession and of the Order; perhaps slightly modified due to the change in wording.

("The laws of the Preachers", contained in LCO, has been replaced by: "our institutions," at the request of Father Duval.)

4. LCM 18:I (taken from LCO 18, I)

a. Evangelical value of our obedience

The specifically Christian aspect of obedience is stressed: the imitation of Christ obedient to the will of the Father. Four texts from Scripture are cited, two of which are found in *Perfectae Caritatis* 14: Jn 4:34 and Heb 10:7.

These quotations were introduced at the request of a Sister on the Commission who wished to retain something from the text made by the Roman Commission (R.C. 225,1).

Each tradition has its own way of reading these texts from Scripture. The best interpretation is perhaps that given by St. Augustine, since it is at the basis of the understanding of obedience presented in the *Rule*.

In a study of obedience in the *Rule*, Father Berrouard makes this comment: "In all the texts of the New Testament which speak of the obedience of Christ, except for Lk 2:51 which says that Jesus was subject to his parents, the verb *upakouô* is used. Literally this means: to listen to the word while submitting to the word." "And Jesus," Augustine explains, "obeyed by listening to the word of His Father in order to do His will, and that even to death on the cross; He thus shows us the way: we too must listen to the word in order to put it into practice." (47) It is the reverse of Adam's attitude.(48)

This word of God to which we must listen is transmitted to us through Scripture or through the Church, or through the *Rule*, which indicates to us nothing other than what the Lord asks of us in Scripture; or again, through the prioress who, herself, is listening to the Word.

There is perhaps an Ignatian influence in the expression of *PC* 14 used at the beginning of no. 18:I: Christ submitted to his Father. In Scripture the obedience of Christ is spoken of, and only once his submission: when he was a child, he was subject to his parents. Now it is precisely this passage from Scripture which St. Ignatius prefers when speaking of obedience.

b. Resemblances between LCM 18:I and *PC* 14

The entire paragraph of LCM which we are studying is very close to *PC* 14, but with two important differences on the level of the theology of obedience. Therefore we shall first study the resemblances between the two documents, then the differences.

"By this profession"

"This" refers to what precedes. Now in the preceding paragraph there was question of profession made in the classical sense, then of the promise of obedience.

The content of LCM 18:I is different: it refers to what *PC* 14 said in reference to the profession of obedience. It seems therefore that "this profession" is to be understood in the sense in which profession is used in *PC* 14. But in the *Decree on Religious Life*, "profession" designates in a comprehensive way the various forms of commitment of institutes of consecrated life. "Profession of obedience" thus has here the sense of a vow of obedience

since in the Order our form of commitment is a vow. (Its sense differs from that of the same expression in LCM 1:VI; 152:II.)

We may well wonder why here, since without any doubt it is a question of a commitment by vow (cf. no. 19:I), the exact term was not used. (The same remark also applies to no. 25:I; 29:III.) Would it not have been better to begin the paragraph with: "By our vow of obedience"?

"Under the guidance of superiors who... hold the place of God"

Here again, it is a matter of a quotation from PC 14, where "*vices Dei gerentibus*" generalizes the "*vices Christi gerens*" of the *Rule of St. Benedict* (II, 2). (Cf. Father Duval)

De Vogüé situates the context in which we must understand the Benedictine expression:

"The abbot is a layman, exercising a function analogous to that of the bishop and belonging like him to the category of 'teachers,' that is, ministers placed by Christ at the head of his Church in these latter times, after the prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles, to whom they legitimately succeed. However, the Church properly speaking is ruled by the bishop, while the abbot governs only "a school of Christ" or monastery.... These two hierarchies, ecclesiastical and monastic, may equally appropriate the words addressed by Christ to his apostles and their successors: 'Feed my sheep... I shall be with you until the end of the ages.... He who hears you, hears me'." (Jn 21:17; Mt 28:20; Lk 10:16). (49)

Yet it does not seem that PC 14 is referring directly to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, but rather to the Ignatian interpretation of the expression: "superiors hold the place of God".

This is in fact a theme which often recurs under the pen of St. Ignatius:

"To obey the superior as you would Jesus Christ our Lord, since he holds His place." (50)

One must regard the superior "as holding the place of Christ our Lord; one must consider him as "the vicar of Christ our Lord." (51)

"The man whom one has recognized as superior in the place of Jesus Christ." (52)

The superior, representing God, is no longer compared, as in the *Rule of St. Benedict*, to the bishop, but to the Vicar of Christ: to the head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

This Ignatian interpretation is confirmed by the document of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on the essential elements of the religious life: religious, it says, "are members of religious Institutes whose structures reflect the Christian hierarchy of which Christ himself is the Head" who has for His representative the sovereign pontiff.(53)

Another difference with the Benedictine rule: it is his function that causes the Jesuit superior to hold the place of Christ.(54) Now this perspective is totally foreign to ancient monasticism.

As Father Labourdette remarks, submission is not yet obedience. Submission is found also in the animal world, for example, while obedience addresses freedom. Submission for Ignatius is the bond which unites superiors and inferiors.(55) Whence the appellation "superiors"? This term has a very precise meaning in Ignatian spirituality which is altogether foreign to the Benedictine tradition where the abbot is a Father, and to the Augustinian and Dominican tradition where the one who governs is the first among equals.

The term "superior" has now, moreover, taken on a generic sense: it includes all the responsible members of religious life.

c. The differences between the two texts

Obedience and the common good

LCM 18:I speaks of the common good. But this is foreign to *PC* 14, and also to all the documents of the Church on religious life. A single exception: the apostolic exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio* of Paul VI.(56) Probably because Father Régamy collaborated on it.

The common good, in our text, is the common good of the Church and the Order which obedience aims at promoting.

LCO 18, II clarifies what is meant by the common good. It is therefore interesting to know this paragraph, even if the Mixed Commission (friars and Sisters) has suppressed it, judging that LCM 20:II contains the same ideas, better expressed!

LCO 18, II thus makes it clear that the common good is concerned with the religious and apostolic orientations of the community, which should rightly be the object of the community's reflection (cf. LCO 6). This shows us how obedience is related to the common good, in the determination whereby the community has its role to play. Our no. 18:I is therefore to be read from this point of view.

By their human ministry

Another modification in connection with *PC* 14: superiors "by their human ministry" hold the place of God. The addition is destined to temper an expression foreign to our tradition (Father Vicaire). In the Order, in fact, the role of the superior is a role of service: service of the common good.(57)

In connection with obedience Father Ranquet writes: "This divine pedagogy, assumed by the Church, [does not teach me] precisely to obey the superior as obeying God, but to express and nourish in my obedience to the superior my filial confidence in God." (58)

We can measure the difference from the Ignatian interpretation: "Supposing and believing, as one does habitually in regard to the articles of faith, that all the superior orders is an order from our Lord God and His holy will, one proceeds blindly... to the execution of what is commanded." (59)

The expression "and our Sisters" was added to the text of LCO by the Roman Commission.

5. The primacy of obedience (LCM 19)

a. The eminent place of obedience (No. 19:I)

It seems that in this paragraph, "counsels" is used in the strict sense of "the three counsels" (cf. LCM 152:II).

This paragraph takes up the teaching of St. Thomas found in *Ila Ilae*, q. 186, a. 8, corpus:

"The vow of obedience is the principal one of the three vows of religion, and this for three reasons. First, because by the vow of obedience a man offers something greater to God, namely, his own will, which is of greater value than his own body, which he offers to God by continence, or external goods, which he offers to God by the vow of poverty....

"Secondly, because the vow of obedience includes the other vows, and not vice versa. For although a religious is bound by vow to observe continence and poverty, these are

also included under obedience, which embraces many other things besides continence and poverty.

"Thirdly, because the vow of obedience properly extends to the acts most closely related to the end of religious life. Now the more closely anything is related to the end, the better it is. Therefore the vow of obedience is also the most essential to the religious life...."

LCO 19, I is constructed in parallel fashion. It develops in three points the same theme: "the eminent place of obedience."

The first point corresponds to St Thomas's first point: it bears on the total gift of the person which is made by the vow of obedience.

The second point corresponds to St. Thomas's third point: it shows that actions produced by obedience are closer to the goal of profession.

The third point seems to me to correspond to the second point developed by St. Thomas: "...through it, finally, all the other elements of the apostolic life are accepted at the same time," the apostolic life being understood as the form of life led by the apostles gathered around Christ. "It includes all the elements of Dominican life, particularly preaching" (Father Vicaire). Does this not refer to the supereminent value of obedience in so far as it includes all the elements of the Dominican following of Christ?

LCM 19:I differs on this last point of LCO 19. The last argument is replaced (at the request of Sr. M. Rose, Ireland) by a phrase of St. Irenaeus found in *Lumen Gentium*, 56. This phrase mentions the obedience of the Virgin Mary, and it is very laudable, but does it not introduce a break in the core meaning of the paragraph, which has focused on the reason for the supereminent place of obedience in relation to the other vows? The expression "apostolic life" could of course not have been used, but might it not have been possible to say that obedience included all the elements of our following of Christ?

The phrase of St. Irenaeus indicates rather that, by their obedience, the Sisters are inserted in the mission of the Order.

In regard to the last sentence of LCO 19, I: "...because by it a man accepts all that the apostolic life involves," Father Duval made this comment: "This sentence, a reaction to an excessive distinction between religious life and apostolic life, had no relevance for the nuns. The Mixed Commission decided therefore to suppress it."

Why the allusion to the excessive distinction?

Paragraph I of LCM 19 stresses the affinity between obedience and charity: to seek to do God's will by obeying the prioress is an attitude born of love. Now charity is the goal of every Christian and all the more of the religious life (59 bis). This prepares the way for paragraph III of no. 19, for this love which nourishes obedience is the filial love which the Spirit pours into our hearts to make us like to the Son.

Obedience is again presented as the response to God's consecrating action: by it we vow ourselves to God.

b. Obedience - sacrifice (19:II)

Obedience aims primarily at union with Christ, then with the Church; because of this it is a sacrifice since, according to St. Augustine, "every work which contributes to uniting us with God is true sacrifice." (60) The obedience which is born of charity and leads to charity is therefore a true sacrifice.

But due to our condition as sinners, obedience includes costly renunciation.

Now Christ, because of our sin and our need of being redeemed, offered himself as a sacrifice, passing through suffering and obedience unto death.

The aspect of mortification that accompanies our obedience can therefore become an interior offering of the sacrifice of Christ and can contribute thereby to the union of all persons with God.

c. Obedience - liberation (19:III)

Obedience lived by free choice liberates us from ourselves and "far from lessening the dignity of the human person, by extending the freedom of the sons of God, leads it to maturity" (PC 14).

Our text explains with the help of a sentence from St. Gregory how obedience proceeds from free choice. It is a quotation contained in an article of the *Summa* on obedience entitled "Whether one man should obey another": "God left man in the hand of his own counsel, not in the sense that he could do whatever he pleases, but that he approach every act, not under the stricture of a natural necessity, in the way non-rational creatures do, but out of free choice issuing from his own counsel. Just as he should undertake everything else from this personal decision, so should he face obeying superiors. On this point Gregory notes, 'Whenever we submit humbly to another's will, in our heart we are rising above ourselves.'" (61)

To obey is to rediscover the path of freedom lost by Adam; it is to find our joy in doing the will of God; it is indeed a gift of self to God.

6. The communal role of obedience (LCM 20)

a. No. 20:I

Paragraph I includes a modification in relation to LCO 20 (requested by the Sacred Congregation of Religious). LCO reads: "the necessity of working for the common good which commands the obedience of the brethren...." The link between the common good and obedience is strongly emphasized.

The purpose of this paragraph is precisely to show that, the common good being by definition common to all, the prioress should consult the community on all the important points of our life. It is therefore indeed the prioress whom we obey, but a prioress who has sought to discover, with the entire community, the requirements of the common good. This could be a source of reflection on the way in which we envisage the role of the prioress, council and chapter (62) and on our manner of living out our obedience. It is not enough to have the prioress' permission or to do everything the prioress tells us, to live Dominican obedience well. It is also necessary to ask ourselves how concerned we are, in community, about seeking the common good. Dominican obedience has an obligatory communal dimension. It cannot be simply an interpersonal relationship between a prioress and a Sister.

Perfectae Caritatis brings up the problem of collaboration between religious and superiors, and it is interesting to compare this text with our Constitutions. There is no mention of the common good in PC 14. The text says: "Subjects should be brought to the point where they will cooperate with an active and responsible obedience in undertaking new tasks and in carrying on those already undertaken. And so superiors should gladly listen to their subjects and foster harmony among them for the good of the community and the Church, provided that thereby their own authority to decide and command what has to be done is not harmed." (The last line is found in our Constitutions.)

Paragraph I ends by stressing the connection between obedience, unanimity, and charity. All the Sisters should share in the government so as to contribute to the fulfillment of their vocation: to form a single body which tends toward charity, our common goal.

This paragraph should be read in connection with LCM 3:II and 7.

b. LCM 20:II

The text as it stands at present is the result of an important deletion imposed by the general council; the text which had been proposed had reproduced that of LCO.

"Each brother should be given as much responsibility and freedom as possible" was suppressed by Father Bouchet and Father Duval.

The deletion was made because of the fact that our obedience is not lived out in the setting of the apostolate and therefore does not require the same initiatives to be taken and the same responsibilities.

As it now stands, this paragraph emphasizes that authority should be attentive to the work of the Holy Spirit in each one (cf. LCM 173).

We are in the tradition of St. Basil regarding obedience. Father Raffin remarks: "Very quickly, with that keen and realistic Greek, St. Basil, common life and obedience would take on a new aspect.... In communities of reasonable dimensions, the abbot tries to know each of his monks and to discern in each one the charism which should be developed to bear fruit in the community. One can already foresee the fraternal dimension of obedience which will be the characteristic note of the Mendicants." (63)

c. LCM 20:III

The duty of the prioress is explained with the help of a quotation from the *Rule* (Chapter VII) (63 bis) which refers to Mt 20:25-28. She who governs should be "on the alert" (*praesse*) "for the others" (*prodesse*) as St. Augustine loves to put it.(64) This simple phrase gives the character of authority in Dominican government: a service. This was worth mentioning, for as St. Augustine remarks realistically, "hardly anyone is exempt from the love of dominating and of human glory." (65) This paragraph also emphasizes the need for cooperation between the prioress and all the Sisters.

d. Relation of obedience to the other virtues (LCM 20:IV)

The first sentence takes up PC 14: "Let subjects, in a spirit of faith and love...."

The second is very close to the considerations developed by Humbert of Romans on obedience in his *Letter on the observance of regular life*. Here are its titles: "obedience should be prompt, devout, willing, simple, ordered, joyful, strenuous, universal, persevering." (66) "Prompt" and "simple" are in our text. "Diligent" which figured in LCO has been replaced by "cheerful" at the request of Sr. Marie-Aimée (cf. Father Duval).

To develop these various aspects of obedience, Bl. Humbert took examples from *The Lives of the Brethren*; from this fact we can see to what a point our roots are in the monastic tradition.

7. LCM 21

This Number has more reason for the brethren. But for us, it may touch on permissions to be asked of the bishop regarding enclosure, or recourse to the Master of the Order. The first sentence repeats LCO 22, I; the second comes from the schema of the Roman Commission.

8. LCM 22 (67)

"This Number does not express a current form of government; that is why the text has not been placed at the beginning of 'government' as the Congregation requested. For the power of the Roman Pontiff would be exercised by a Congregation.

On the other hand this chapter on obedience contains nothing about a formal precept, which shows its exceptional character.

Our obedience envelopes our whole life in a much more habitual way. There is a daily exercise of obedience without recourse to a formal precept."

N.B. the meaning of the word "obedience" in our Constitutions.

We do not make a single vow of obedience (cf. Letter of Father Vicaire, above). But the profession of obedience is spoken of in our Constitutions: LCM 1, VI; 152:II. How should we understand this expression?

"There is an ambiguity in the use of the word 'obedience' in our Constitutions.

"The obedience of the vow of obedience. This is related to our common life and is the virtue which enables us to obey a precept of the superior in view of the common good. It is a form of justice.

"Obedience not properly so-called, which is in reality the acquiescence of love, which our profession signifies. This act, this commitment of love is a personal act of theological love (faith, hope, and charity) anterior to all justice, to all common life. This 'obedience' (improperly so-called) is spoken of in regard to our profession and extends to the totality of our Dominican commitment. Unless we carefully distinguish between these two uses of the word we cannot clearly understand the documents which use them." (68)

Let us note that this obedience as a general virtue is close to what St. Augustine means by obedience in his writings and particularly in his *Rule*. Obedience is "a disposition of the soul which governs all the attitudes of man so well that it is found at the root of all the other virtues and is also their crown." (69)

A question arises in connection with the analytical index. We read under the word "obedience": the sole promise expressed in profession: 15:II, 157:I." Now, can we place the profession of obedience referred to in no. 152:II on the same plane with the promise of obedience referred to in n. 157:I, if we take into account the distinction made by Father Vicaire?

III. ARTICLE 3: CHASTITY

A: TEXT

(The text of Constitutions 23-26, with its endnotes, has been omitted here).

B. COMMENTARY

The chief source of this Chapter is PC 12. It was impossible to include the ancient texts of the Order, for since then there has been a great evolution in the way of envisaging chastity. It suffices to look at the point mentioned by Humbert of Romans when he speaks of chastity in his *Letter on the observance of regular life* to be convinced of this!

1. The example of St. Dominic (LCM 23) (72)

This text is from Father Vicaire.

From the outset, the emphasis is placed on the evangelical dimension of chastity: it is chosen for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:12, cited in *PC* 12).

"This specification," notes Msgr. Philips in commenting on *Lumen Gentium* 42, "is of the highest importance. On the one hand, the terms 'purity, perfect chastity, or consecrated chastity' also have a place in the ideal proposed to Christian spouses; and on the other hand celibacy seen simply as the absence of a conjugal bond has no positive value." (73)

It was indeed this chastity for the sake of the kingdom that St. Dominic lived; he preserved unstained virginity (74) out of love for God. This gift of his entire being to God was at the source of his zeal for souls and of the immense compassion which filled his heart.

2. Value and significance of consecrated chastity (LCM 24)

a. Theological dimension of chastity (24:I)

The first two lines of I are borrowed from *PC* 12: "The chastity 'for the sake of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 19:12) which religious profess should be counted an outstanding gift of grace;" and from *LG* 42: "total continence," "in celibacy."

To consider perfect chastity in celibacy as a gift of grace may appear obvious to us today, but it was not always so. It took centuries for the Church to have a clear awareness of this. Origen, Methodius of Olympus, Ambrose and others saw it rather as an ascetical effort which won the right to a reward. Augustine was certainly [one of] the first to see consecrated virginity as a gift from God which ought to be received with humility. (75)

LCM reinforces this idea of gratuity by adding to the text of LCO: "God who has first loved us" (a verse St. Augustine loved to quote).

Our total and exclusive love for Christ in response to his gratuitous love creates a bond of belonging which unites us inseparably to the Lord. We have here an implicit reference to 1 Cor 7:32-34 (cf. *LG* 42), verses which play a predominant role in the understanding of virginity by the Fathers of the Church. Our consecration has the character of a spousal covenant.

It is this spousal aspect which the remainder of the paragraph, proper to LCM, develops. While LCO stresses the apostolic dimension of chastity, LCM looks to the nuptial dimension, found in *PC* 12: "In this way they recall to the minds of all the faithful that wondrous marriage decreed by God and which is to be fully revealed in the future age in which the Church takes Christ as its only spouse."

LCM expresses the same idea with the help of the ritual for the consecration of virgins.

The last sentence in the paragraph recalls finally the apostolic dimension of our chastity, thus establishing a parallel to what was said of St. Dominic. To live in consecrated chastity is to follow the Lamb who offered himself in sacrifice for all. It is to enter into this offering.

If preferential love for Christ is the determining cause of our chastity (*Evangelica testificatio*), love for God and for all people is its goal (cf. *PC* 12). This paragraph, in a few lines, gives the theological dimension of chastity, the criterion of its authenticity.

b. Ascetical dimension of chastity (24:II)

This paragraph continues the text of *PC* 12 (which constitutes, we might say, the underlying framework of the Article): "Chastity frees the heart of man in a unique fashion," (cf. 1 Cor

7:32-35) "so that it may be more inflamed with love for God and for all men." To freedom of heart and charity, which are the fruits of chastity, LCO and LCM add the purity of heart which held such an important place in monastic tradition and in the life of St. Dominic.

The last sentence of this paragraph departs from the text of LCO: the benefit for the apostolate resulting from consecrated chastity lived in full is replaced by the benefit resulting from it for the contemplative life: to be free for God - *vacare Deo* (cf. LCM 28:II). The word "vacare" is borrowed from Psalm 45:11: "*Vacate et videte.*" This expression is used in *PC* 7 to characterize Institutes given wholly to contemplation.(76) It is a matter of setting aside everything that has not for its purpose continual prayer, so as to live in leisure, interior repose. The state of the contemplative life is characterized by an attitude of availability to God, favored by chastity.

c. Eschatological dimension (24:III)

The text is identical to that of LCO.

This passage presents the eschatological dimension of chastity, likewise mentioned in *PC* 12: this is why it is "a special sign of the future heavenly kingdom."

The possibilities of love freed by consecrated chastity have a hidden connaturality with the values of the kingdom and with the profound mystery of the Church united to Christ, which will be revealed in the next world. Consecrated chastity permits the realization already of what will be the condition of every Christian at the time of the Parousia: each one will be united to Christ as bride to Spouse.

3. Formation in chastity (LCM 25)

When we compare this text with the parallel text in LCO we see at once that two aspects have been systematically downplayed, as Father Duval notes: progressive formation in chastity and the difficulties which this may involve. The Congregation of Religious, which made the deletions, evidently judged that for nuns the goal would be reached immediately and without problems!

a. Chastity and marriage (25:I)

The superiority of chastity "for the sake of the kingdom" over marriage is attested in Church tradition and was proclaimed at the Council of Trent (Session 24, c. 10). For all that, there is no question of depreciating human love and marriage: the latter is in fact the sacrament of the love-covenant which unites Christ to his Church. But marriage constitutes a sacrament, hence a human sign with all the opacity that signs carry.

Consecrated chastity, on the other hand, is not a sacrament. It represents on the contrary in a more immediate way, without the mediation of a sign, the eternal covenant of love which conjugal love signifies indirectly through the sacrament of marriage. It should be understood as the very prolongation of human love: it brings to it this transcendence toward which it should always tend (cf. *Evangelica testificatio* 13).

b. Education in chastity (II)

LCO 27, II included this: "It is necessary that the brethren progressively acquire physical, psychological and moral maturity." "Progressively" and "physical" were suppressed.

LCO has a paragraph III which exposes the difficulties inherent to chastity. Only the first sentence of it has been retained, and placed at the end of our II.

The resulting text is parallel to *PC 12*: "Since the observance of perfect continence touches intimately the deepest instincts of human nature, candidates should neither present themselves for nor be admitted to the vow of chastity, unless they have been previously tested sufficiently and have been shown to possess the required psychological and emotional maturity."

4. How to progress, how to meet difficulties? (LCM 26)

The first part of LCO 28, I, which returns to the difficulties of chastity, has also been suppressed!

Chastity is totally oriented to union with Christ in love. Scripture, the Eucharist, love for the Virgin Mary, reinforce this union with Christ and hence strengthen one in chastity.

Paragraph II. Chastity which makes the love of Christ grow in us broadens our heart to the dimensions of the world, the dimensions of the charity of Christ. This charity is concretized first of all in the sisterly love we bear our Sisters.

Paragraphs III and IV are taken purely and simply from the end of *PC 12*: "Trusting in God's help, let them not overestimate their own strength but practice mortification and custody of the senses (cf. LCM 26:III). Neither should they neglect the natural means which promote health of mind and body (cf. *Ibid.*, IV) ...By a certain spiritual instinct, they will repudiate everything which endangers chastity (cf. *Ibid.*, III). Let all, especially superiors, remember that chastity is guarded more securely when true brotherly love flourishes in the common life of the community" (cf. *Ibid.*, II).

IV. ARTICLE 4: POVERTY

A: TEXT

(The text of Constitutions 27-34, with its endnotes, has been omitted here).

B. COMMENTARY

Article 4, as far as generalities go, is almost totally the text of LCO.

1. Apostolic poverty at the beginning of the Order (LCM 27)

This Number corresponds to no. 30 of LCO, done by Father Vicaire. It takes its stand very briefly on the two forms of St. Dominic's poverty: mendicant preaching like the Apostles, and a conventual state of mendicancy. Let us recall in short what these two dimensions of poverty meant for Dominic.(83)

a. Mendicant preaching (1206)

Mendicant poverty was present from Dominic's earliest activity in Languedoc (1206). The Bishop of Osma exhorted the preachers to "work... at preaching...; but, to close the mouths of evil men, they must act and teach after the example of the good Master: to present themselves humbly, to travel on foot without gold or money, in a word to imitate the apostolic way of life in all things (Mt 10:9)." (84)

Dominic had been shaped by this mendicant preaching: "the rule of the Apostles" (cf. the mission of the Apostles in Galilee, Mt. 10:9), which he associated with "the life of the Apostles": "No one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). Mendicancy heightened detachment and increased fraternal union; detachment was the instrument of union.

b. No more property, but still revenues (1216)

Up to 1216 mendicant preaching went hand in hand with the possession of property. When Dominic instituted a religious community in Toulouse he decided with his brothers "to have no more property, so as not to hinder their office of preaching by anxiety over earthly goods, but only revenues." (85)

These revenues, however, did not prevent great poverty in the convents.

c. Conventual mendicancy

Dominic wanted to carry out his inspiration completely: the mendicancy that accompanied preaching would also be the condition of the convents themselves. This meant giving up revenues.

In December, 1219, Dominic obtained from the Pope a charter describing the brethren thus: "Having cast off the burden of worldly riches" - they had no more property - "so as to be able to run more lightly through this world, they have come to the abjection of voluntary poverty."

And in 1220 at the Chapter in Bologna, the decision was taken to adopt conventual mendicancy.

This decision put the brethren squarely in the category of the abject, that is, of the poor who were scorned to the point of being rejected by society, totally marginalized. This was the involuntary poverty of the thirteenth century. The poor man had no power and was completely dependent on others. The dire straits of the cities was on the increase, placing the poor in a state of subjection, really abjection, at the bottom rung of the social scale.

The voluntary poverty of Dominic would be marked by this type of pervading atmosphere of want.

Since the brethren no longer live the mendicant poverty which existed in the time of St. Dominic, the substance of the article has been reproduced with some modifications. The new text explicitly specifies that the Sisters shall always have possessions and revenues. Yet a common spirit should animate friars and Sisters: the voluntary poverty inscribed in the testament of St. Dominic. Jordan recalls this to Diana in his *Letter 7*, but the sense is not the same as for the brethren:

"The kingdom of the world and all the luxury of the world you have despised for love of Jesus Christ, your well-beloved Spouse, and it is his poverty that you have chosen and adorned yourselves with; this is why you shall dwell in his palace and be filled with the delights of his house. But what do I say? Is it poverty that you have donned? On the contrary, you have rejected it, and it is wealth that you have chosen. For the poverty of Christ is voluntary poverty; it is that poverty 'in spirit' thanks to which the kingdom of heaven is yours. I do not say will be yours, but is yours, because it is of those who are poor in this way that your Spouse has said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.'

"She then who embraces the poverty of Christ does not esteem the treasures of the world. Is not poverty itself the greatest of treasures? Because of it, and in comparison with it, all things else are deemed as nothing and thought of as deprivations."

2. Personal poverty: conversion to charity (LCM 28)

This entire Number speaks of poverty from a personal angle, as a response to an appeal of Christ (Mt 19:21), as a conversion to a new life (Col 3:1) and again as a configuration to Christ (2 Cor 8:9). All this means putting into practice the requirements of the first beatitude (Lk 6:20, Mt 5:3). The following number (LCM 29) takes up the communal dimension of poverty (Acts 4:32). Thus the two have as their objective to show the evangelical character of poverty: the numerous biblical citations used make this obvious.

a. The meaning of Matthew 19:21

Paragraph I begins by mentioning the poverty in fact and in spirit required by PC 13; it is an invitation to live the beatitudes (cf. Lk 6:20; Mt 5:3). But while the *Decree on the Religious Life* bases voluntary poverty from the start on the example of Christ who, though he was rich, made himself poor to enrich us by his poverty (2 Cor 8:9),⁽⁸⁶⁾ our paragraph first refers to the appeal addressed by Christ to the rich young man, and quotes 2 Cor 8:9 at the end, showing that this appeal to poverty had no other aim than to conform us to Christ by following him more closely.

The reference to Mt 19:21 is understandable. This verse has played a basic role in all religious tradition. It suffices to recall here the vocation of St. Anthony.⁽⁸⁷⁾ And St. Thomas uses this same verse to show the connection between our religious poverty and the perfection of charity.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Yet it is not explicitly stated that this verse of Scripture is the foundation for the evangelical counsel of poverty. Our Constitutions are in the tradition of the Conciliar documents which do not cite the pericope of the rich young man in speaking of the evangelical counsel of poverty. John Paul II himself, who commented at length on this Gospel passage of the rich young man, situates this verse as "introducing poverty into the setting of an evangelical counsel,"⁽⁸⁹⁾ but he does not make it the foundation of the evangelical counsel of poverty. In contemporary Church texts on the subject, attention is directed to following the poor Christ rather than to searching for an explicit counsel of poverty in the Gospel. Let us note further that modern exegetes contest the traditional interpretation of Mt 19:21 as the basis for a counsel of poverty.

b. Poverty and configuration to Christ

The middle of Paragraph I indicates to us the benefits of poverty in a very Augustinian perspective⁽⁹⁰⁾ used by St. Thomas in the *Summa Theologiae*. While in the *Life of St. Anthony* the call of the Lord to poverty heard in the Gospel leads into the apprenticeship of asceticism, in our paragraph this verse of Scripture is read in a theological perspective.

We need to look at the commentary on this made by St. Augustine and quoted by St. Thomas: "Worldly goods actually possessed are more loved than those that are desired. For why did that young man go away sad, except that he had great wealth? It is one thing not to wish to acquire what one has not, and another to renounce what one already has. The former are rejected as something foreign to us; the latter are cut off like a limb."⁽⁹¹⁾

Love of earthly goods is an obstacle to charity. Thus St. Thomas concludes: "So it is that to attain the perfection of charity, the first foundation is voluntary poverty, whereby one lives without anything of his own."⁽⁹²⁾

Man[kind], St. Augustine tells us, did in fact turn away from God, the one true Good, and sought to satisfy his desire for the infinite in the goods of this world: having took the place of being. Henceforth it has been difficult to love God totally while possessing riches: "Too little does he love thee who loves anything with thee which he loves not for thee." (93)

To be converted, under these conditions, is to free oneself from an idolatrous attachment to material goods, and to turn anew toward God. But, as St. Augustine again says, "The nourishment of charity is the lessening of covetousness; its perfection is the absence of all covetousness." (94) This is where voluntary poverty comes in: since it is a renunciation of all possession of material goods, it attacks cupidity radically and sets us on the way of conversion. It enables us to turn away from the pursuit of the "vanities" of the world and to lift our hearts to God, (95) to "the things that are above" (Col 3:1). In this way we try to realize in our own lives one of the goals sought by the preaching of the brethren.

The quotation of 2 Cor:8-9 shows us that this step is in fact an imitation of Christ, who made himself poor for our sake. In this we share the perspective of the Fathers of the Church referred to by the Council. (96) Augustine, for example, loved to quote this verse when he preached about poverty to the wealthy. (97)

c. Eschatological dimension of poverty

Paragraph II begins with an allusion to Mt 6:33, inviting us to seek true goods, and to place our treasure in the justice of the Kingdom - that is, to consider them as "primary, so that all is ordered to them" (98) - while abandoning ourselves to the providence of God for all that we need. (99)

The practice of poverty will help us to do this: it frees us from the servitude (*est libertas a servitude*) into which the sinner is plunged. Believing that he possesses material goods, he is possessed by them! Poverty even frees us from anxiety about the riches of this world (cf. Mt 13:22). Indeed, concern about worldly goods, says St. Gregory, "preventing the good desire from entering into the heart, blocks the entrance, as it were, of the life-giving breath." (100)

To despoil oneself of one's goods enables one to make room for the contemplation of wisdom, (101) for wealth is an impediment to the contemplative life "insofar as preoccupation with it disturbs the quiet of the soul." (102) Liberating us, poverty thus causes us to adhere to God (Ps 72:28; Vulg.) and to be free for him alone (Ps 45:11). (This is contemplative leisure). It makes us rich with the riches of God himself. PC 5 tells us that through contemplation religious "fix their minds and hearts on God," after having told us that religious give up all things for Christ.

There is no contemplation without detachment, without liberation, which for us should take on a more radical form.

d. The use of goods and charity

The paragraph then closes with a quotation from the *Rule*, the translation of which does not always make good sense. It should be translated, "so that in all things used by necessity, which will pass, charity which perdures may predominate." Before discussing the significance of this quotation within paragraph II, we shall analyze its content.

Necessity in the singular has a precise meaning in Augustine. It marks with its seal the figure of the present time. There are in fact two lives, that of this world, which is a life of necessity, and that of the fatherland, which is a life of enjoyment. (103) Necessity is a burden which includes all bodily needs. It pertains to our condition of pilgrims far from the fatherland,

far from the eternity of God which alone is stable. It is passing, and consequently all the material contingencies of the monastic life will cease one day.

Thus, we must use (*uti*) all that is necessary during the time of necessity and not enjoy (*frui*) it. St. Augustine opposes *frui* and *uti*: *uti* has to do with our relationship to material goods and *frui* with our relationship to God and to our neighbor in God.(104)

We need to be careful however not to think that because necessity will pass, the things we use in this world should be despised. For if material goods are used in the service of charity, they are at the service of the one thing necessary, which precisely will not pass away, that which we shall find in eternity: charity which remains (1 Cor 13:8) and which has therefore eternal value. Is it not this which builds the heavenly City? If then charity predominates (1 Cor 12:31) in the use of goods in this world, the transfiguration of the heart through this same charity has already begun.

Paragraph II reminds us, then, that poverty is not an absolute. We must be exacting in regard to ourselves but mindful that poverty should be subordinated to charity which is precisely the true good of the Kingdom which we seek to attain by living poorly.

e. Solidarity with the poor

Let us note the mention of solidarity with the poor, so dear to St. Dominic: it was one of the motivations for his choice of mendicant poverty. This perhaps gives us food for thought regarding the type of poverty which will really bring us close to the poor of today.

3. Communal dimension of our ideal of poverty (LCM 29)

a. Evangelical foundation (29:I)

Holding goods in common is going to be the expression of conversion to God. The avaricious man, for Augustine, is he who "refuses to possess in common and to share, but wishes to amass things for himself, takes possession of things and appropriates them as if they existed only for the satisfaction of his personal cupidity." (105) He sees the entire universe as related to his own interests. He seeks unity, but in order to monopolize everything instead of possessing it all in common. Poverty, finding its expression in the holding of goods in common, will therefore be the best means of struggling against cupidity.

But there was more in the holding things in common of the first community of Jerusalem, and the *Rule* proposes an example to us.

To have nothing of our own, but to have all in common (Acts 4:32; *Rule* I, 4): here we have the consequence of a far more basic attitude, one heart and soul. Just as we are gathered together "into one" (*Rule* I, 3),(106) so all that we possess is "one" (*Rule* V, 1).

Our poverty is completely oriented to the common life. The holding of goods in common, in the *Rule*, is the visible manifestation of oneness of minds and hearts, but it is also the first step toward this unanimity. It is therefore both a means leading to the oneness of minds and hearts, and the fruit of concord.(107) He who loves his brother possesses in common with him all that he could not possess by himself; what each one possesses is held in common: "All that my brother possesses is mine if I love him without jealousy. I do not possess it by myself, but I possess it in him; yet it would not be mine if we were not members of the same body and depended on the same Head." (107 bis).

Imitation of the Apostles therefore is about the common life and poverty.

In this same tradition, Humbert of Romans refers to the *Acts of the Apostles* when introducing his chapter on poverty in his *Letter on observance of the regular life*: "Let us now consider another regular observance so as to learn how we ought to live without anything personal of our own. From the perfection of the primitive Church you learn that you ought to hold all things in common (Acts 2:44 and 4:32)." (108)

For Augustine, holding things in common constitutes the crown of poverty - despoilment: "Many men and women preserve virginal continence, without however carrying out the Lord's counsel: 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me' (Mt 19:21) and without daring to associate with those who live under the same roof, none of whom can say that he possesses anything of his own, for all is held in common (Acts 4:32)." (109)

Like Anthony, Augustine sees in personal renunciation a fundamental step, but it is oriented to fraternal communion. Upon those who, after the example of the first Christians in Jerusalem, became perfect through giving up their goods - according to the recommendation of the Lord to the rich young man (Mt 19:21) - descends the perfume of unity (Ps 132).(109 bis). Stress is laid on holding all goods in common.

Just as poverty - despoilment - finds its fulfillment in the holding of all goods in common, the use of material goods with charity as its goal (LCM 28:II) finds its fullest expression in being used in the service of the common good of the monastery, the Order, and the Church (LCM 29:I).

The sentence in the *Rule* - cited in LCM 28:II - is also the conclusion of a paragraph devoted to the common good: "So whenever you show greater concern for the common good than for your own, you may know that you are growing in charity. Thus, let the abiding virtue of charity prevail in all things that minister to the fleeting necessities of life." (110)

To use material goods in the service of the common good is to be motivated by what Augustine calls "social love." As opposed to "private concern," "social love" is characterized by concern for the common good (110 bis); it consists especially in a right relationship to material goods. Instead of being the object of an egotistical cupidity, things are considered as common goods, to be shared among all. As a result, social love engenders concord.(111)

The *Rule* makes it clear, furthermore, that each one shall be given what she needs (Acts 4:35), which balances the affirmation of Acts 4:32: to hold all things in common. It is not a question of egalitarianism but a concern for persons; for health, work, former habits, and strength are not the same for all. This aspect of our poverty has not been put in the Constitutions.

It is perhaps regrettable that the quotation from Mt 10:9 was not accompanied by that of Acts 4:32, to introduce the evangelical dimension of our Dominican poverty.(112)

b. Practical consequences (29:II, III)

These two paragraphs deal with the consequences of our vow of poverty: no private property (II) and no superfluities (III). On the accumulation of goods, cf. *PC* 13.

Let us note again in III the expression "the poverty which all have professed" which recalls the expression of *PC*: "profession of poverty." Would it not have been preferable to say "to make a vow of poverty"?

4. Gifts (LCM 30) (113)

This Number was originally an ordination. But since it was the only one regarding Articles 2, 3, and 4, it became a number of the Constitutions.

It was the Spanish Sisters who insisted that it should be introduced. It can be a subject for communal reflection. For gifts for oneself or for the community should not be requested without permission: it may be that the community prefers to give what is necessary. This is a witness to be given.

5. Practical aspects (LCM 31-34)

- Work: cf. *PC* 13 which requires religious to make their own the common law of work. As to gifts to the poor, cf. also *PC* 13 which requires religious to help the needy.
- The communal character of poverty.
- A sense of responsibility in the collective life of the monastery (cf. Administration: LCM 203, 264).

Conclusion

The Article on poverty includes the four principal scriptural quotations which have influenced our tradition in the matter of poverty.

Mt 19:21, since the time of St. Anthony, heightens the dimension of renunciation in order to follow Christ; Acts 4:32 places us in the tradition of the first Christian community in Jerusalem and proposes to us the ideal of the apostolic life with its dimension of poverty - the holding of all goods in common, an expression of concord. The mention of Mt 10:9 evokes mendicant poverty, in regard to preaching as well as to conventual life, which was the characteristic note of St. Dominic's poverty: the rule of the Apostles is joined to the apostolic life. 1 Cor 8:9, finally, as the Council has said, shows the foundation of all voluntary poverty: the imitation of Christ.

Implicitly we are invited to meditate on all these texts of Scripture with St. Augustine and St. Thomas, privileged witnesses to our tradition.

V. ARTICLE 5: REGULAR OBSERVANCE

A: TEXT

(The text of Constitutions 35-73, with its footnotes, has been omitted here).

B. COMMENTARY

1. Structure of the text (LCM 35)

a. Comparison of LCM 35 and LCO 39-40

Our n. 35:I,II,III is taken from LCO 39 and 40, divided thus:

LCM 35:I up to "Order of Preachers" + III = LCO 39

LCM 35:II = LCO 40

In LCO, the goal is given (n. 39), then a definition (n. 40) of observance.

In LCM, some sentences about enclosure have been introduced between the paragraph concerning the goal of observance and the paragraph which defines it; which breaks the unity of the whole.

The examination of the different stages of development of this text enable us to understand the reason for this anomaly.

Text of LCM of 1971

In the 1971 Constitutions, n. 40, I repeated in a synthetic manner, which was impoverishing it is true, nos. 39 and 40 of LCO. What was meant by "observance"? That was not stated.

A second paragraph gave the meaning of enclosure which is one of the observances (a term which is not used anywhere else in the Constitutions) which help to foster regular observance. This is how LCO 40 situates enclosure.

In this context, it was normal to have developed here all that concerned enclosure, for it occupies a different place in the life of the brethren from that of the Sisters.

Text of LCM of 1986

In the 1986 Constitutions, II reestablishes well the definition of observance given by LCO 40. But at the same time, the development on enclosure which followed the goal of observance is in a position no longer appropriate.

On a simple reading, if one does not know the history of the text, enclosure appears as the essence of observance. Would it not have been better to place the end of the present paragraph I after the present paragraph II, as developing one of the points which favor observance?

This point of view conditions the plan followed in analyzing Article 5.

b. The goal of observance (LCM 35:I up to "Order of Preachers")

It is important to note that the former terminology of "observance" in the singular has been reestablished; this term was used in the *Primitive Constitutions* as well as in Humbert of Romans's *Letter on the observance of the regular life*.

In the thirteenth century it was thought that the Apostles had led a regular common life. The various elements of our observance are therefore a way of living out the following of Christ in the image of the first community in Jerusalem: they serve unanimity and show outwardly a unanimity of hearts. (119 bis)

Like common life and obedience, observance includes all the activities of our life seen from a certain aspect. Its goal is to manifest and sustain that unanimity which is the very end of our life in community: observance and the common life are closely linked. Observance appears as "the source and fruit of our common life." (120)

This is how the *Primitive Constitutions* of the brethren express it: "Since the Rule commands us to have but one heart and soul in the Lord, it is fitting that living under the same rule, linked by the same profession, we should likewise be united in our canonical way of life, so that the unity that we ought to preserve in our hearts (unanimity) may be strengthened and manifested outwardly by the uniformity of our customs." (120 bis)

Although it was in the prologue of the Primitive Constitutions, this text, says Father Vicaire, has not been taken up, because there was fear of hindering the necessary movement toward decentralization.

Humbert of Romans, in commenting on this text borrowed from the Premonstratensians, speaks of a threefold unanimity: "'To have one heart and soul in God.' We ought to have a threefold unity, that is, of goods, of manner of life, and of souls. On the subject of unity of goods it is said in the Rule that 'all things should be held in common among you'; regarding unity in our manner of life, it is said further on: 'that unity of hearts...be shown outwardly by uniformity of manners'; and about unity of souls, cf. the text explained here." (121)

Common observance, like community of goods and community of souls, characterizes Dominican common life.

Our no. 35:I, makes it clear that observance is at the service of the following of Christ (122) and of the contemplative life led in the Order of Preachers. It includes all the elements of our following of Christ.

c. What does "observance" refer to? (LCM 35:II as far as "truth")

"All those elements which make up Dominican life and regulate it by a common discipline (122 bis) belong to regular observance." (LCO 40, repeated in LCM 35:II).

Here is Father Vicaire's comment:

"When we commit ourselves to regular observance, we commit ourselves to carry out a certain number of elements of common life according to the discipline fixed by the Constitutions.

"The elements which form by their synthesis 'Dominican observance' are: 'the common life, the celebration of the liturgy and private prayer, the fulfillment of the vows, the assiduous study of the truth' (LCO adds: the apostolic ministry).

"Thus defined, our regular observance includes our entire following of Christ. In consequence, we avoid reducing regular observance to a few practices in our life added to other things. We see our whole life from this one point of view... Dominican observance is a whole body of basic common activities enjoined by our rule, with their own balance, harmony, and hierarchy." (123)

d. The observances (LCM 35, end of II)

The expression "observances" has not been used, in order to stress the observance which is "congenital to the Order" (Father Vicaire). But we cannot have observance (in the singular) without concrete ways of fulfilling it: there is no regular observance without observances. Being subordinated to observance, the actualization of which is their purpose, they are subject to change in the course of centuries and according to circumstances. Thus their modalities differ from those of the Gillet Constitutions.

Our paragraph gives a list of observances: enclosure, silence, the religious habit, work, works of penance. Chapter is not mentioned because in LCO there is a question about it in regard to the common life.

e. Enclosure and observance (LCM 35, end of I: "devote themselves...")

For the brethren observance is connected with preaching. Father Duval throws light on this by commenting on a letter of Innocent III to the Bishop of Rega on the subject of the organization of preaching in the region entrusted to this bishop.

"This letter," he says, "enables us to understand St. Dominic's attitude. This bishop thought it should be understood as the adoption of a common plan of action, but also a regimen of common life, a common habit, etc. And this unanimity should have its source in the one heart and soul of Acts, as the Pope reminded him. To act otherwise could only scandalize those they were trying to convert. This was Dominic's perspective. He did not choose monastic observance: he rejected the cowl, the long offices, the enclosure: all that could separate him from the world to be saved by preaching.

"For the brethren observance developed within preaching, it was its helper: for the nuns the cloister was the place where Dominican observance was lived out, wholly oriented to the salvation of souls. The enclosure was intended to facilitate all the elements of our life which lead to union with God, but always keeping in mind St. Dominic's words: How can one be a member of Christ without contributing to the salvation of all people? The enclosure, then, is the place wherein is perpetuated that singular grace of our blessed Father for sinners, the unfortunate and the afflicted, whom he carried in the inner sanctuary of his compassion." (124)

2. The Enclosure (LCM 36-45)

a. Evangelical value of the enclosure (LCM 36 and 35:I)

All the aspects of the spiritual dimension of enclosure mentioned in LCM are originally in *Venite seorsum*, I-VI.

Separation from the world is an essential dimension of every Christian life: "...from now on,... let those who deal with the world [be] as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:29-31, quoted in VS, I).

But for nuns, this value is lived in an absolute sense: "in spirit and in truth"; it will therefore have a very strong eschatological dimension. Like the wise virgins, nuns await the coming of the Lord (Mt 25:1-2).

Nuns await the Lord in the cloister, and it is the Lord whom they follow in withdrawing from the world, he "who withdrew to the wilderness and prayed" (Lk 5:16). (125) The desert is stressed as "a place of the most profound, most continual prayer, that place where Jesus taught us to pray." (126) Eucher of Lyons strongly emphasizes this aspect of desert spirituality in his eulogy of the desert (written in 426): "the same Lord Jesus, as it is written, went into solitude and prayed there (cf. Lk 5:16). So this place was called a place of prayer, since, in praying to God, a God himself showed us by his example that it was suitable for prayer...; and in going himself to an out of the way place to make his prayer, he showed us where he wishes us to go when we have something to ask him." (127)

The hidden life of the nuns is wholly oriented to the contemplation of the mystery of salvation realized in Christ (Eph 3:18; Jn 3:16); it is the contemplation of the mystery of Love, communion in the love of the Father who gave his Son for the salvation of the world. Dominic's cry resounds in their hearts: "O my God, my mercy, what will become of sinners?"

But the nuns do not follow Jesus into the desert in isolation; they live in the heart of a community animated by the ideal of the *Rule of St. Augustine*: "to dwell together in the house" (Ps 67:7), the house which is the monastery, being a cell of the Church which is the house of God. They are, thereby, a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem which the brethren help to build while working to gather all people into unity.

This whole orientation toward God favored by withdrawal from the world is possible because the cloister means liberation from tasks inherent to life in the world, so as to devote themselves

solely to the service of God: "they are freed from worldly affairs so that they may have leisure to devote themselves whole-heartedly to the kingdom of God".

Otium - negotium: this is one of the many antitheses occurring so often in the works of Augustine. *Negotium* refers to all human activities implied by a social life (LCM 36 uses *saeculum*; it is not a question of fleeing the world by leaving inhabited places, but in fleeing worldliness, that is, all that would be an obstacle to contemplative leisure: social rank, a career, money, etc.) *Otium* is contemplative leisure, being occupied only with the things of God.

"In leisure" - in *otio* - says Augustine, "it is not the absence of work one should love, but the search for or the discovery of truth, to make progress in this, without refusing to share with another what one has found." (128)

The *otium* which for him is lived in community should be united with a certain readiness to share with others, for God is the Common Good par excellence which no one should appropriate to himself.

Number 36 recalls that St. Dominic wanted the Sisters to be cloistered.(129) But can we say that the motivations for enclosure which we have just enumerated were those of St. Dominic? No text affirms this. But it is certain that they were in the spirit of our tradition.

b. Norms for enclosure (LCM 37-45)

Some modifications were made in the 1971 text:

- The former n. 42:II has been suppressed. It seems that what concerns enclosure refers exclusively to the Holy See.
- The present n. 37 provides an adaptation of enclosure for monasteries which do external works.
- The former n. 43:I has been suppressed. Modifications of the limits of the enclosure are henceforth the concern of the monastery.
- The former n. 45 concerning egress for postulants, visits to Sisters hospitalized outside the monastery and parents who are gravely ill has been suppressed.
- The present n. 40:I is new: it asks for moderation in the use of canon 667, 4, which says: "The diocesan Bishop has the faculty of entering, for a just reason, the enclosure of cloistered nuns whose monasteries are situated in his diocese. For a grave reason and with the assent of the Abbess, he can permit others to be admitted to the enclosure, and permit the nuns to leave the enclosure for whatever time is truly necessary."

There are two questions to be examined in regard to this number.

1. How to reconcile it with the norms of *Venite seorsum*?

This text takes up VS 8¹ which concerns the question of occasional egress, but by giving more responsibility to the local ordinary. While the other norms of VS on enclosure are always in force (LCM 37), this number of canon law is to be used for occasional egress and ingress (cf. LCM 227:IV). The prioress is urged to use it with prudence (LCM 40:I).

¹ Ed. note: The norms of the Instruction *Verbi Sponsa* (1999) have revised those of VS on some points. This commentary is dated 1992.

2. How should we interpret "a grave reason"?

Sr. Eliane of Montebello, professor of canon law and a member of the committee of canon law of the conference of major superiors of France, explains it thus: "We can say that a reason is grave when the following are involved:

- The fundamental rights of a nun (health, integrity, reputation, right to privacy, rights connected with religious profession...).
- The monastic vocation of the Order."

For "the necessary time"

This time should not exceed three months (VS 7). But some canonists set a limit of six months.

In n. 43, "a grave reason" has replaced "a reasonable cause," in connection with the right of the prioress to inspect mail. This therefore becomes exceptional.

3. Other Observances (LCM 46-67)

For the other observances, there are few modifications of the 1971 Constitutions. We note two: The habit is also "a witness to poverty"; cf. canon 669, 1.

Fridays when a solemnity is celebrated are no longer days of Church abstinence (LCM 67); cf. canon 1251.

a. Silence (LCM 46-49)

The example of St. Dominic (46:I)

In speaking of silence, our Constitutions cite the celebrated phrase that St. Dominic "had inscribed in the Rule of the Friars Preachers": "Speak only with God or about God, among yourselves or with your neighbors" (cf. LCO, Fundamental Constitution, II). In the process of canonization the brethren indicated this sentence as wholly characteristic of the founder.(130)

This sentence, Father Vicaire comments, makes clear "how the synthesis of the two aspects of Dominican life operate together and transcend all dualism.... It is the object which constitutes the synthesis. Our life will have all the more unity as our actions direct us more completely to God.

"Yet this formula is not a creation of Dominic. He borrowed it from the founder of the Order of Grandmont, St. Stephen of Thiers or Muret. 'The virtuous man (that is, the perfect man) should always speak of God or with God: for in his prayer he speaks with God, and with his neighbor, of God.'(131)

"It was already well known that Dominic, at this Chapter in Bologna, showed himself deeply impressed by the example of the Grandmontines who, in order to apply themselves more exclusively to divine union through contemplation, had conceived of both conventual mendicancy and the government of the Order by the lay brothers. Dominic therefore wanted to inaugurate these two daring practices in his Order. He could only obtain his brethren's consent to the first.(132) We thus see a fresh witness to his admiration for the holy men of Grandmont in the use he made of the formula, 'with God, or about God.' The important thing for us is that it was from pure contemplatives that the founder borrowed the most celebrated formula of the life of the Preachers, a proof if one were needed of the depth of contemplative life that he ambitioned for his brethren." (133)

Theodoric of Apolda regrouped three points dear to St. Dominic - those which he caused to be inserted in the Primitive Constitutions - and stressed their benefits. Among them is the formula which we are studying here. This is the text:

"Among other ideas which formed a part of his teaching, and among other beautiful examples of his life [St. Dominic's], there were three points above all which he asked his children to observe: to speak always of God or with God, not to carry money with them on their journeys, and never to accept temporal possessions. These things make the heart pure, the spirit free from anxiety, and enable the servant of God to meditate on divine things and treat of spiritual realities." (134)

This silence of St. Dominic which he proposes that we should imitate is like that of the Virgin Mary (cf. Lk 2:19): silence of heart allows us to hold in our memories unceasingly the mystery of salvation.

The example of the Sisters of St. Sixtus (LCM 47)

The chronicles of the monastery of St. Sixtus tell of Sister Bartolomea: "She showed a rigorous fidelity to observing all the points of her Rule: but above all she was an example to everyone in the practice of silence. She was never heard to speak unless it were a case of real necessity, and then she spoke briefly and in a low voice." (135)

b. The Table (LCM 54-58)

According to Cassian (136), reading during meals goes back not to the Egyptians but to the Cappadocians. In the *Little Rules*, to the question: "With what sentiments and what attention should one listen to the reading made during meals?", St. Basil answers: "With more pleasure than we experience in eating and drinking, so that our spirit rises until it is in no way distracted by the pleasures of the body but delights rather in the words of the Lord, like the one who said: 'They are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb' (Ps 18:11)." (137)

To take our meals in silence while listening to reading is to insert ourselves in the monastic tradition.

Our Constitutions apply to all reading what is said in the *Rule* of the Word of God. "Let not your mouths alone take nourishment but let your hearts too hunger for the word of God." (Mt 4:4)

Augustine is here paraphrasing the word of the Lord: "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4)

The Word of God is nourishment, it is this bread that we ask for in the Lord's Prayer, the bread "by which we live, not our bodies but our souls. This bread is necessary to us now, workers in the Lord's vineyard, it is our nourishment." (138) It is given us for the time of our earthly pilgrimage, (139) to stimulate our journey, while bodily food, if we are not careful, may cause us to relax it. It gives us strength to struggle against the old self:

"Let the word of God...nourish your heart, while you practice bodily fasting, and let the inner man, thus fortified by the food proper to it, undertake and sustain with all the more strength the mortification of the outer man." (140)

But it is not enough that this spiritual nourishment be offered; we must hunger for it. This hunger is the attitude of the humble who recognize their limitations as creatures and sinners and who await their food from God, the source of life. Definitively, only the one who does not allow himself to be weighed down by external goods can direct his desire toward God, can know hunger for his Word. (141)

Such should be our disposition while listening to the reading at meals.

c. Works of Penance (LCM 61-67) (142)

Like that of St. Dominic, our penance has apostolic value.

When Dominic bruised his foot against a stone while walking barefoot like the Apostles, he said: "This is penance!" (143) Likewise, when a heretical guide made him go through brambles, he said to his companion, "Let us have confidence, dearest, we shall be victorious, for already our sins are being washed away in blood!" (143 bis) Father Vicaire comments:

"The Preacher's penance, while washing away his sins, makes him transparent to grace and prepares the way for the salvation of others. Penance, apostolic in its source, bears its apostolic fruits." (144)

St. Dominic's penance was the expression of his sharing in the redeeming cross. Peter Ferrand reports of Dominic and his companion: "Crucifying their own flesh every day for the salvation of their neighbor and sleeping on bare wood, after the example of the one who slept in death on the gibbet of the cross." (145)

d. Regular Chapter (LCM 68-73)

Some reflections of Father Vicaire will help us to understand the role of chapter in the Order:

"The Chapter of Faults which was very important at the beginning of our Order, has today died a good death, the reason being that it has been progressively emptied of its substance: 1) by the distinction between the internal and external forum in the sixteenth century, and 2) by the disappearance of the regime of Christendom. In the medieval regime, every religious action was performed through personal inspiration and through social and physical constraint: the *poena* or penalty imposed for a fault. The chapter of faults was meant to apply these penances, which introduced a kind of violence within the community, or even externally, since one could, in order to apply the decisions of the chapter, appeal to the police and even to prison, and in certain cases to the stake; yes, some of our brethren were burned at the stake in grave cases involving the faith. This was the regime of Christendom. Christendom is finished; today we have a totally different regime. To keep the outward forms of the thirteenth century, when in the first place we no longer have the means of constraint of the thirteenth century, and in the second place when in the sixteenth century the distinction between internal and external forum was introduced and thus the grave and most grave, or infamous faults were withdrawn from chapter material, would be to live by appearances only, and to radically ignore what the nature of the chapter was: namely, a remarkable form of common action for the improvement of each one's behavior and the fulfillment of a common good. From the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, the chapter of faults contributed powerfully to the formation of moral consciences throughout the European monastic movement. The people who entered monasteries were often frustrated; they were not used to introspection and hardly knew the difference between mortal and venial sin; they were ignorant of the hierarchy of faults and their nuances. The daily chapter of faults formed their moral consciences. This is why the distinction between faults reached the maximum of precision in the Order of Preachers, who were called to become confessors. There were no Constitutions in the thirteenth century making so many precisions, enumerations, and distinctions between faults, as did the Constitutions of St. Dominic.

"Secondly, through the application of penances, the chapter of faults helped to raise the religious and moral level of convents. For very objective people, an organism such as the chapter, with its exterior penances, including blows and imprisonment, was needed.

"Thirdly, the chapter of faults was particularly necessary in the Order of St. Dominic in order to carry out its great innovation: a legislation which did not oblige under sin, but to penances. Since the chapter of faults no longer fulfilled these essential functions, other formulas have been sought." (146)

✕

ABBREVIATIONS

EE	= "Essential Elements" (In full: "Letter of John Paul II to the Bishops of the United States and Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate." April 3, 1983/May 31, 1983)
ET	= <i>Evangelica Testificatio</i>
LCM	= Constitutions of the Dominican Nuns
LCO	= Constitutions of the Dominican Friars
LG	= <i>Lumen Gentium</i>
PC	= <i>Perfectae Caritatis</i>
RC	= Instruction on the Renewal of Religious Formation <i>Renovationis Causam</i> (CIVCSVA, 1996)
RD	= Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, <i>Redemptionis Donum</i> (1984)
VS	= <i>Venite Seorsum</i>

NOTES TO PART II, CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1. This text, up to the commentary on LCM 3, is an adaptation made to our Constitutions from a conference of Father Vicaire on LCO (excepting n. 3 of paragraph II, the commentary on LCM 3:1 and a few details).
2. Cf. RD, 7.

NOTES TO PART II, CHAPTER I:

1. R. Creytens, *Les commentateurs dominicains de la règle de S. Augustin du xiii au xvi s.*, Archivum fratrum praedicatorum, v. 33 (1963), 121-157.
(ED.: Notes 2 through 8 pertain to the text of the Constitutions and are omitted here).
9. M.-F. Berrouard, "The primitive community of Jerusalem as an image of the unity of the Trinity. One of the Augustinian exegeses of Acts, 4:32 a, in *Mélanges offerts au Père Luc Verheijen*, Sonderdruck aus *Homo Spiritualis* (Wurzburg: Augustinus - Verlag, 1987), 207-224.
10. For the Augustinian commentary on these verses, cf. Sr. Marie-Ancilla, *Commentaire de la Règle de Saint Augustin*. The 13th century commentators on the *Rule of St. Augustine* did not fail to ponder over these verses. We shall quote three who reflect the ideal of common life, that may have been inspired by the Rule during this period:

“‘Have one heart and soul in God’. These are the first fruits of the mind, that we must offer to almighty God from the beginning of our conversion, as Wisdom recommends in the words ‘My son, give me your heart’ (Pr 23).

“For we are drawn to God first through our heart and will. If we withdraw physically from the world, let us be united to God in heart and soul; thus we can say in truth, ‘To cling to God is my happiness.’ ‘For he who adheres to God is one spirit with Him’ (Ps 72; 1 Cor 6). Therefore, let us cleave to Him so as to be strengthened by Him, to be one (*unum*) in Him, and delighting in Him, let us say to Him, ‘My soul clings to You’ (Ps 72). Charity separates us from the world and unites us to God. So we shall have one heart and soul in God, if we love God with our whole heart and soul. ‘God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him’ (1 Jn 4).” (Hugh of St. Victor, *Opera, pars III – Mystica, P.L.*, 176, 884).

“In order that you may be truly unanimous in the house, have one heart and one soul: but according to God, not according to the flesh, or the world, or the ancient enemy. And note this well: desiring to lead you to this unanimity, this unity of heart and soul in God, the blessed Augustine took care to clarify the reason why you are gathered together in community.

“It seems obvious that our external assembly is a sign and symbol of the unanimity of which we just spoke, that interior unity that joins us interiorly in a single soul, just as we are gathered exteriorly in a single place...

“Live in peace and unanimity. Unanimity is related to benevolence, and peace to good manners. For we live in unanimity if we do not distance ourselves from one another; we are at peace, if our life styles are not incompatible. And the order is right, since he first urges us to live in unanimity, and then in peace. We cannot possibly realize peace in our lives, if we are not already unanimous in our willing” (Adam of Dryburgh, *De ordine et habitu canonic. Praem.*, *P.L.*, 198, 517-525).

For the commentary of Humbert of Romans on Acts 4:32, cf. *op. cit.*, note 2 bis, 71, 76.

11. Humbert of Romans, *op. cit.*, note 2 bis, 76.
12. M.-H. Vicaire; I have replaced “make profession” with “promise obedience,” in keeping with Father Vicaire’s letter of May, 1988.
13. LCO, Fundamental Constitution, VII.
14. Bl. Humbert of Romans, *op. cit.*, note 2 bis, XVIII, 77.
15. For this paragraph, cf. Bl. Humbert of Romans, *op. cit.*, note 2 bis, XVIII, 76; for Augustinian parallels to this paragraph, see especially A. Sage, “Contemplation in communities of common life,” *Recherches Augustininiennes*, v. VII, 245-302.
16. Augustin, *C. Faust.*, V, 9; *Coll. c. Maximino*, 12; *Sermo* 71, 35; 116, 6; *Tract. in Io. Ev.* 39, 5.
17. *Ibid.*, S., 71, 21.
- 17 bis. Bl. Humbert of Romans, *op. cit.*, note 2 bis, 76-78.
18. J.-R. Bouchet, “Communities of brethren,” Diskette 80003.
19. M.-H. Vicaire, *Saint Dominique et la hantise de l’unanimité*, conference, Lourdes.
20. Augustine, *De mor. eccl.*, I, 31, 67.
21. *Ibid.*, S., 103, 4.
22. *Ibid.*, *En. in Ps.*, 132, 13; 85, 24.
23. *Ibid.*, S., 267, 4.
24. *Ibid.*, S., 272; *Tract. in Io. Ev.*, 27, 11.
25. *Ibid.*, *S. Denis*, 6, 2; *Tract. in Io. Ev.*, 26, 14.
26. *Ibid.*, *De doct. Christ.*, III, 10; S., 77, 4.
27. *Ibid.*, *En. in Ps.*, 132, 2.
28. Hugh of St. Victor has shown the connection between obedience and unanimity: “If we are gathered together physically, we must also live together spiritually. It is no use being assembled in one house, if our wills are opposed.” (Quoted by Humbert of Romans, *op. cit.*, note 2 bis, 72)

"God pays more attention to unity of mind than unity of location. In one house, there may be many men, differing in education and in heart and mind. Now a single purpose and a single love for God ought to bring unity out of all these differences. For this, we need to have the same mind and heart, namely, to serve God and to love Him with all our heart and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves.

"We are required to exercise the virtue of peaceableness. When a brother enters the monastery, he will begin to give up his own will, imitating the One who said, 'I have not come to do my own will' (Jn 6), and again, 'Father, not my will, but Thine be done' (Mt 26). It is truly the work of peace to lead a person to do, not his own will, but that of another, as far as is good. Moreover, it is a sign of great humility. From this is born obedience, and from it charity, peace, justice, and all the virtues of the Church, grow. While, if I want to do my own will and another his, we will have conflicts, arguments, anger and quarreling, all works of the flesh" (Hugh of St. Victor, *op. cit.*, 882).

29. For Numbers 4 and 5, the Commentary is based on a conference of Father Duval on the Constitutions, given at Lourdes in 1971.

29 bis. J.-R. Bouchet, "The Call," Diskette 80001.

(ED.: Notes 30 through 41 pertain to the text of the Constitutions and are omitted here).

42. M.-H. Vicaire, "The Dominican *sequela Christi*," conference (Chalais, 1969).

43. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Th.* IIa IIae, q. 104; cf. M. Labourdette, "The common good, foundation of obedience" in *Le problème de l'obédience*, collection, 1st point, N. 8 (Paris: Apostolat des éditions, 1969), 59-77.

44. A.-H. Thomas, "La profession religieuse des dominicains; formule, cérémonie, histoire", in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 39, 1969, 20-23 (quoted in J.M.R. Tillard, *Devant Dieu et pour le monde, Le projet des religieux* (Paris: Cerf, 1974), 396, note 130.

45. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Th.*, v. 3 (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 1076.

46. M.-H. Vicaire, Letter, May 1988.

47. Cf. Augustine, *Tract. in Io. Ev.*, 25, 16; 41, 7; *De Gen. ad litt.*, VIII, 14, 32; *De Trin.*, XIII, 17, 22.

48. *Ibid.*, *Tract. in Io. Epist.*, 8, 6.

49. A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de saint Benoît, Commentaire doctrinal et spirituel*, v. VII (Paris: Cerf, 1977), 105.

50. Ignatius, *Letter* 38, 7.

51. *Ibid.*, 88, 4.

52. *Ibid.*, 37.

53. Cf. *EE* 49.

54. Cf. Ignatius, *Letter* 88, 26-27.

55. Cf. *Ibid.*, 38, 5 and 37.

56. Cf. *ET*, 25.

57. Cf. *Rule of St. Augustine*, 7.

58. J.-G. Ranquet, *Conseils évangéliques et maturité humaine* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1968), 115.

59. Ignatius, *Letter* 88, 23.

59 bis. St. Thomas Aquinas, *S. T.* IIa IIae, q. 186, a. 2, corpus.

60. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 10, 6.

61. St. Thomas Aquinas, *S. T.* IIa IIae, q. 104, a. 1, ad 1.

62. Cf. Humbert of Romans, *De officiis ordinis*, Ch. XXI, in *Opera de vita regulari*, v. 2 (Rome: 1889), 284.

63. P. Raffin, "La tradition dominicaine de l'obéissance religieuse," (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 40 (cf. *Petites Règles*, q. 152). Cf. Bl. Humbert of Romans, *op. cit.*, note 62; Ch. 5, 205: "The prior should know, interiorly and externally, the natures, temperaments, and dispositions of his friars, and should not

treat all in the same way. He should adapt himself to each one according to his own dispositions as far as reason and religion allow, and saving sin, should share their weaknesses and defects, moral as well as physical."

- 63 bis. For a Dominican comment on this sentence of the Rule, cf. Bl. Humbert of Romans, *op. cit.*, note 2 bis, 543-547.
64. Augustine, *Epist.* 134, 2; S., 46, 2; 340, 1; *S. Morin guelf.*, 32, 1.
65. *Ibid.*, *En. in Ps.* 1, 1.
66. Bl. Humbert of Romans, *Epistola*, *op. cit.*, note 2 bis, Ch. VI-XIV, 4-10.
67. The commentary on this Number is by Pere Duval (1971).
68. M.-H. Vicaire, Letter of Sept. 24, 1988.
69. M.-F. Berrouard; cf. Augustine, *De bono conj.*, 24, 32; *En. in Ps.*, 71, s. 2, 6.
(ED.: Notes 70 and 71 pertain to the text of the Constitutions and are omitted here.)
72. The titles are those of P. Duval.
73. Philips, *L'Eglise et son mystère au deuxième concile du Vatican. Histoire, texte et commentaire de la constitution Lumen Gentium*, v. II (Paris: Desclée, 1968), 106.
74. Process of canonization, Bologna, 5.
75. Cf. Augustine, *De sancta virg.*, 31.
76. J. Leclerq, "La vie contemplative et le monachisme d'après Vatican II," *Gregorianum*, 47 (1966): 503.
(ED.: Notes 77 through 82 pertain to the text of the Constitutions and are omitted here).
83. Cf. M.-H. Vicaire, *Dominique et ses Prêcheurs* (Paris: Ed. universitaires Fribourg Suisse, Ed. du Cerf, 1977), 222-265.
84. Cernai, 21, in M.-H. Vicaire, *Saint Dominique et ses frères, Evangile ou croisade?* (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 60.
85. Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, 42; *op. cit.*, note 83, p. 231.
86. PC 13; cf. LG 42.
87. Cf. Athanasius, *Life of St. Antony*, 2.
88. St. Thomas Aquinas, *S.T. IIa IIae*, q. 186, a. 3, corpus.
89. RD 4.
90. Cf. I. Bochet, *Le désir de Dieu* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1982), 78-90.
91. Augustine, *Epist.* 31, quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, *S.T.*, IIa IIae, q. 186, a. 3, corpus.
92. St. Thomas Aquinas, *ibid.*
93. Augustine, *Conf.*, X, 29, quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, *ibid.*
94. Augustine, 83 q., q. 36, quoted in St. Thomas, *ibid.*
95. Cf. *Rule of St. Augustine*, I, 6.
96. J. Leclerq, "L'exemple de Christ, 'De riche il s'est fait pauvre' ", *Aspects du monachisme hier et aujourd'hui* (Les éditions de la Source, 1968), 51-67.
97. Cf. Augustine, *Sermo* 36, 3; 14, 9.
98. Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, II, 17, 56.
99. Cf. *Ibid.*, quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, *S.T.*, IIa IIae, q. 186, a. 3, ad 2.
100. Gregory, *In Ev.*, I, 15, quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, *S.T.*, IIa IIae, q. 186, a. 3, ad 4.
101. St. Thomas Aquinas, *S.T.*, IIa IIae, q. 186, a. 3, ad 3.
102. *Ibid.*, ad 4. The same perspective is found in Augustine's Letter to Proba on prayer. He presents detachment from the goods of this world, poverty, as the very condition of prayer (*Epist.* 130).
103. Cf. Augustine, *Sermo* 179, 4; 103, 5.

104. F. Cayré, "frui et uti," in *l'Année théologique*, fascicule I (1949): 50-53.
105. E. Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin*, Coll. "Etudes de philosophie médiévale", 11 (Paris: Vrin, 1943), 154. Cf. Augustine: "Whence comes discord among brothers? What causes trouble in the most tenderly united families?... Is it not because their souls are attached to this world, that they think only of what they share, and seek to increase it, multiply their possessions, and seek to find unity in what they possess, only when their possessions are separate from those of their brothers...?" (S., 359, 2). Cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *op. cit.*, 882-884.
106. Cf. Augustine, S., 355; 356.
107. Augustine, *De op. monach.*, 25, 32.
- 107 bis. *Ibid.*, S. Dionysius, 19, 4.
108. Bl. Humbert of Romans, *op. cit.*, note 41, Ch. XV, 10.
109. Augustine, *De sanct. virg.*, 45, 46.
- 109 bis. Cf. *Ibid.*, C. litt. Pet., II, 239.
110. *Rule of St. Augustine*, V., 2.
- 110 bis. Cf. Augustine, *De gen. ad litt.*, XI, 15, 20.
111. Cf. *Ibid.*, En. in Ps. 131, 5.
112. Reference could have been made to commentaries on the Rule of St. Augustine of the 13th century. Cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *op. cit.*, 884: "Call nothing your own, but have everything in common'.... On this subject, we must emphasize the great difference between brothers in the flesh and spiritual brothers. The first divide what is common to them; here, one seeks not what is one's own, but what belongs to Jesus Christ. This proximity is worth more than the other: the one destroys, the other increases. One contains the seed of division, the other develops. One passes away with the world, the other lasts into the next world. It is for the one that we live in the same way in this house; that we remain so in the heavenly Kingdom. 'We are children of God,' says the Apostle, 'but what we shall be is not yet clear to us'... We should therefore possess nothing of our own, but everything should be held in common. In this world, men are attached to many interests: for one it is silver and gold, for another, house and family; for this one fame, power and glory, for that one business, to each his own treasure.
 "But the portion of religious is God Himself. As for us, if we wish to possess this portion, this inheritance that is the Lord, let us show ourselves worthy of possessing Him and of being possessed by Him. If we wish God as our inheritance, let us possess nothing outside of Him. The man for whom God is not enough is truly avaricious! If we seek something else, the gift of persuasive speech, gold, silver, lands, God will refuse to be counted as one of these goods."
113. This is Father Duval's comment (1971).
 (ED.: Notes 114 through 119 pertain to the text of the Constitutions and are omitted here).
- 119 bis. Cf. Prologue of the *Primitive Constitutions* of the brethren; Const. of St. Sixtus 1.
120. M.-H. Vicaire.
- 120 bis. M.-H. Vicaire, "Primitive Constitutions", in *Saint Dominique, la vie apostolique* (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 162.
121. Bl. Humbert of Romans, "Expositio Magistri Humberti super constitutiones fratrum praedicatorum", in *Opera de vita regulari*, v. II (Rome, 1889), 4.
122. "To follow Christ, to imitate Christ more closely" is an Ignatian expression used by the Council (cf. LG 42-44; PC 1) to characterize the following of Christ in religious life. Cf. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, n. 167.
- 122 bis. The word discipline is used here in the sense of Cîteaux: Cistercian observance; cf. J. Leclercq, article "Discipline," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, XXII-XXIII, col. 1294.
123. M.-H. Vicaire, "La sequela Christi dominicaine," conference, Chalais, 1969.
124. Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, 12.

125. Cf. VS, introduction. *Secedentem in deserto*. The verb *secedere*, used in the Gospels when Jesus withdrew from the crowd or entered the solitude of the desert, has given us *secessus*: retreat from the world (cf. LCM 1: V; 36). Cf. J. Leclercq, "La retraite," *Chances de la spiritualité occidentale* (Paris: Cerf, 1966), 331.
126. Cf. J.-R. Bouchet, "Partir au désert", Diskette 80004.
127. Eucher, *Eloge du désert*, 228, in M.-J. Rouet de Journel, *Textes ascétiques des Pères de l'Eglise*, (Fribourg: Ed. Herder, 1947), 404.
128. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XIX, 19.
129. M.-H. Vicaire, *Histoire de saint Dominique*, v. I, *Un homme évangélique* (Paris: Cerf, 1982), 258-259.
130. *Primitive Constitutions*, Dist. II, Ch. XXXI; cf. Process of canonization, Bologna, 37-41, 47.
131. *Sententiarum Stephani Grandimontensis*, Ch. XXX, 2. PL. 204, 1102 B. These religious were called the "good gentlemen" of Grandmont.
132. Cf. M.-H. Vicaire, *op. cit.*, note 83, 244.
133. Cf. M.-H. Vicaire, "La Constitution fondamentale des Frères Prêcheurs," *La vie dominicaine de Fribourg*, (July-August 1973), n. 4:296.
134. Thierry d'Apolda, *Livre sur la vie et la mort de saint Dominique*, n. 228, translated by l'Abbé A. Curé (Paris: International Catholic Library of the work of St. Paul, 1887), 294.
135. *Chroniques du monastère de San Sisto et de San Domenico e Sisto à Rome*, v. I (Levanto, 1919), 51-52.
136. Cassian, *Inst.*, IV, 17.
137. St. Basil, *Petites règles*, q. 180; cf. St. Basil, *Les règles monastiques* (Maredsous, 1969), 266.
138. Augustine, *Sermo* 56, 10; cf. 103, 6.
139. *Ibid.*, 57, 7.
140. *Ibid.*, 205, 1.
141. *Ibid.*; cf. *En in Ps.* 42, 1; 106, 6, 11.
142. Cf. M.-H. Vicaire, *op. cit.*, note 83, 260; 266-267.
143. Process of canonization, Bologna, 27.
- 143 bis. Frachet, II, 2.
144. M.-H. Vicaire, *op. cit.*, note 83, 260..
145. Ferrand, 22.
146. M.-H. Vicaire, Commentary on LCO 7, 2. For a reflection on the Chapter of today, it might be well to consult: Tillard, J.-M.-R, *Les religieux au coeur de l'Eglise: Problèmes de la vie religieuse* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 97-100.



BOOK REVIEWS: TWO BOOKS ON THE CHURCH ¹

Sr. Mary Thomas, O.P.
Buffalo, NY



THE RED HAT by Ralph McInerny, Ignatius Press, 1998, 585 pages, sewn hardcover, \$24.95

How many ways can you tell a story? There is the news report, the interview; you can write straight history, drama, poetry, or fiction. Beyond words, you can tell your story in stone or marble or glass, in music, dance, on canvas or screen, as is so well attested by the internationally renowned historian Guy Bédouelle O.P. in his current history of the Church. There are as many ways to tell a story as there are people.

Ralph McInerny has elected to tell his story in the form of a carefully crafted detective thriller, a can't-put-it-down book that keeps you in suspense up to the next to last page. On which page you breathe a sigh of incredulous relief. McInerny has drawn you into his story. You're a part of it; it is part of you.

This is true in more than a purely aesthetic sense. "The Red Hat" is about the Church, about America, and about the Church in America, where it gets very close to home. If Thomas Lannon, Archbishop of Washington DC and president of the NCCB, is the protagonist in this tale, and Father Frank Bailey the liberal antagonist, their boyhood friend Jim Morrow, retired Notre Dame professor and newly appointed ambassador to the Holy See, functions as a Greek chorus, reflecting McInerny's mindset, indeed imaging the author.

Archbishop Lannon has an insatiable desire for the red hat, symbol of the top rung of the ecclesiastical ladder, bar Pope. He has quietly and persistently worked the usual channels open to a Church politician, including the Rector of the North American College in Rome and the papal nuncio in Washington, without tangible results, although rumor has it that the aged Pope is drawing up a list of twenty new Cardinals, the names to be announced shortly. Then fate plays into the Archbishop's hands.

Leslie Norman, recently appointed as Justice to the Supreme Court, a Catholic and self-admitted lesbian, is refused Communion by her pastor in Arlington, Virginia. Furthermore, New York's outspoken Cardinal condemns Norman's perverted sexual life from the pulpit of St. Patrick's Cathedral. At this point Archbishop Lannon, as president of the Conference, comes under fierce pressure from conservative Catholics to back his fellow churchmen. But in a homily in St. Matthew's Cathedral he waffles, aiming to save face for the President regarding his recent appointment to the bench, and to project an image of his own compassionate understanding. He is now in position for acknowledgment from the administration.

With Lannon's diplomatic suggestion that James Murray, retired Notre Dame professor and author of the current bestseller, *The Decline and Fall of the Catholic Church in America*, might

¹ Both of these reviews are reprinted with permission of the *National Catholic Register*.

be an appropriate Presidential nominee for the lapsed post of American ambassador to the Holy See, the plot gathers momentum and rollicks at roller coaster speed over the terrain of the United States and Italy.

The startling prologue of the book now falls into place. In straightforward, classic fashion, the audience has already been made privy to the key facts of a recent murder on the West Coast, or so it thinks. The stage is set for the play of plot and counterplot, muted scandal and political machinations, ideals and human foibles - the whole human condition - against a backdrop of Church/state polarity.

Within the fascinating framework of a mystery story well told, what is McNerny saying? Revealing is the discussion between Jim Morrow, author of the best seller, *The Decline and Fall of the American Catholic Church*, and the Dominican Jordan Boone, who asks,

"How do you yourself see these events?"

"I am trying to make them visible to others."

"But what do you take them to mean?"

"I am a historian, not a theologian."

"Meaning what?"

"I am trying to provide the basis for the kind of judgment you're asking me for. Has the direction the Church has taken been for the good or for the bad, or is it a little bit of each? That is not for me to decide, not in this book."

And so we have a factual picture, gruesome in its accuracy, of the Church in this country over the past four decades and into the Third Millennium. Thrown in for the novelist's good measure are the deaths of two popes, an election, an incipient schism, an anti-Pope, and a scheme for Vatican Council III, to be held in Avignon. Gruesome, yet not without hope, because the picture is realistic and therefore transcends this three dimensional world. It introduces the supernatural - the air we breathe if we would be fully alive.

True to the detective story genre, the Dickensian weave of plots and subplots, replete with exquisitely drawn minor characters, is finally resolved, to the reader's wonder and satisfaction.

The study of Archbishop Thomas Lannon may be said to encapsulate the theme of this book. When the story opens he is motivated unabashedly by his lust for the red hat, and determines to use Jim Morrow, despite their lifelong friendship, as his political trump card in the ecclesiastical game. Yet he vacillates, and goes to Gethsemani Abbey to make a private retreat and to reconsider his values. On his last day at Gethsemani, he receives word from the nuncio in Washington that his name is on the list of the twenty new cardinals. The die is cast. He flies to Rome. At the Fiumicino airport he is kidnaped and stashed away for three days. In that interval, in a lightless, windowless, soundproof cell, facing the probability of death, the Archbishop grows to new stature.

"He smiled in the dark. Among his new certainties was that Thomas Lannan would never be invested as a cardinal. The thought was liberating. How he had wanted that honor. How he had convinced himself that it was an impersonal desire, for his archdiocese, for his country, that he himself did not matter. But it had mattered greatly to him that he should be raised to that penultimate level in the Church. Now he knew it would not happen, and he thanked God that the realization carried no pain. His captors had done him the great service of freeing him once

and for all from his ambition. But it was not for their reasons that he renounced the red hat" (p. 468).

The Church, like this man, is compact of dark and light, agony and peace. Inevitably, we are reminded of the final words of Matthew's Gospel: "I am with you always, to the close of the age."



LOVING THE CHURCH: SPIRITUAL EXERCISES PREACHED IN THE PRESENCE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

by Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, OP; Ignatius, 1998, 218 pages, soft-cover, \$14.95

The reproduction of a detail of Fra Angelico's Sermon on the Mount on the cover of this book was surely inspired. Together with the title, "Loving the Church" it captures the essence of the five-day retreat preached by Cardinal Schönborn to the Papal household, gathered in an intimate group one week in Lent to pursue the spiritual exercises together. Christ, the central figure in the painting, holds a scroll in one hand and raises the other to the heavens, which glow in azure splendor above the tawny rocks. The Twelve are seated informally in a circle below him, the greens, reds and blues of their robes blending imperceptibly into the gold of the Mount and catching up, like echoes, all the shades in Christ's vesture. They are wrapped in "living communion with Jesus Christ" - a name the new Catechism gives to the Church. They *are* the Church, and as we pass beyond the cover to the simple, lucent text within, we begin to see this Church with new eyes, and learn anew to love her.

Who is the Church, in the deepest wellsprings of her being? The Dominican Cardinal would have us open our whole being to "the symphony of the faith," in order to "hear all the notes together." The Church is God's creation: conceived before all ages, formed through the history of Israel, established in this last age as his chosen bride, made manifest in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and destined for eternal union with him at the end of time.

Schönborn has chosen these five elements or stages of the Church's life, delineated in *Lumen gentium* (n. 2) and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 759), as his leitmotif. We are borne along the vast arch rising out of the waters of chaos in Genesis and ascending through, over, and beyond the history of our race, to lose itself in the unfathomable mists of eternity. The arch is the Church. The Church is the bow in the clouds. The splendid truth is that we are not onlookers: we *are* the bow. One with the Church, we share her glorious destiny.

Returning in thought to the primal emptiness where the Spirit brooded over the waters, we contemplate creation from God's point of view. His "Let it be" brings light and life and meaning to the void, fills it with his beauty. At the heart of the story is the Church. "The Church is as old as creation," Schönborn tells us. "In fact, in a certain sense she is older.... In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the Church appears as an old woman: 'She existed before there was a world, and for her the world was created.'" Is this a figment of the imagination? Far from it. We read in the *Catechism*, "God created the world for the sake of communion with his divine life, a communion brought about by the 'convocation' of men in Christ, and this 'convocation' is the Church." To

see the Church, therefore, as the goal of creation is to see her through God's eyes, in all the magnificent reality of his eternal present.

The Church is at once goal and means. The goal of all creation, she is also the means whereby all creation returns to the Creator. How are we to encompass this mind-boggling concept? "A sense of creatureliness," Schönborn suggests, "of what it means to be a creature, is a prerequisite for a sense of the Church ... Creatures are not random ports-of-call in the voyage of evolution ... Creaturely variety is not an accident ... but an expression in many forms of the plenitude of the divine essence... The heart of Christian anthropology is that man is created in the image of God."

Once lost in Eden, the primeval intimacy with God was to be restored by the same creative Word. Nearing the end of Day One of the retreat, we come upon this exhilarating challenge: "Believing in the Creator also means believing in the great things he expects of his creatures.... The creature can never know a greater self-fulfillment than letting himself be totally used by God."

This, and indeed the whole book, may startle a reader immersed in the secular culture that dulls our days. And what will a feminist make of the passing comment, "In Mary we see, gazing across countless generations, the face of woman as God created her: Eve, the mother of all the living"?

We are back to Eden, but it is not a re-run. We are being pointed upward along the arch, through the dark history of preparation, the saga of the Old Covenant, on through the formation, the establishment of the New Covenant, to the appearance of the chosen Bride, black but beautiful in the splendor of the Spirit's manifestation in this last age. We are looking at her destiny, *our* destiny as it has been conceived from eternity to eternity.

Is all this sheer blind idealism? Can we deliberately close our eyes to what we see when we look at the Church, the "institutional Church" as so many think of it today, at the turn of the millennium? Where is truth? How escapist can we be?

The plain truth is that the Cardinal is very down to earth and disarmingly honest. Considering the Samaritan woman at the well, he sees the disciples as "trapped in the stupidity of their self-concern. What a 'confessional mirror' this holds up for us! It challenges and tests our 'compassion.' Is it just 'Anything for a quiet life,' or, 'Avoid complications,' or, 'We don't want a public outcry,' or, 'No awkward scenes, please'? Is there a thirst for the salvation of men burning in our hearts?"

Seeing the little children being brought to Jesus, Schönborn wonders aloud "*why* the disciples abused and barked at the people." He muses, "How often it is we, the apostles and their successors, who hinder people from coming to Jesus!" The "drama of the sin of the shepherds," painfully familiar in the Old Testament, is acted out step by step in the New, from their shocking silences, their talk on the road, to the unkindest cut of all, the dispute over which of them was to be regarded as the greatest (Lk 22, 24). "He foretells his Passion, but *they* are talking about precedence and promotion." This, too, is the Church. This is us. Yet we believe, we *know* that the Church is also the beloved Bride, born from the side of Christ on Calvary.

It is good to grapple with the paradox, good to look honestly at the less than comforting facts. It is even better to see them from God's point of view, even if it means standing on our heads and squinting through the eyes of faith. Acrobatics like this open doors to truth. Books like this lead us to the edge of loving the Church.

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TOPIC INDEX: 1980-1999

INTRODUCTION

The following is a **TOPIC INDEX** to articles by nuns and friars published in *DMS* from 1980 to 1999. It follows upon an **AUTHOR INDEX** covering the years 1980-1998 which appeared in the 1998 issue.

How to use this Index:

1. There is an issue of *DMS* for every year **except** 1981 and 1988. Two issues appeared in 1989, one of which contains the presentations of the 1988 Assembly. Thus, in the Index, **89A** refers to the issue containing these papers, while **89** designates the regular 1989 edition of *DMS*.

2. The **1982** issue of *DMS* appeared as a supplement to the **February, 1983** issue of *Conference Communications*.

3. Each article entry is followed by its location, *i.e.*, **94:102-108** means that the article will be found in the **1994** issue of *DMS*, on **pages 102-108**.

4. Authors are entered under their present (1999) name and monastery. (Cross references to previous religious names and monasteries were included in the 1998 Author Index). Articles that are translations are followed by the names of both the author and the translator..

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(1999)

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